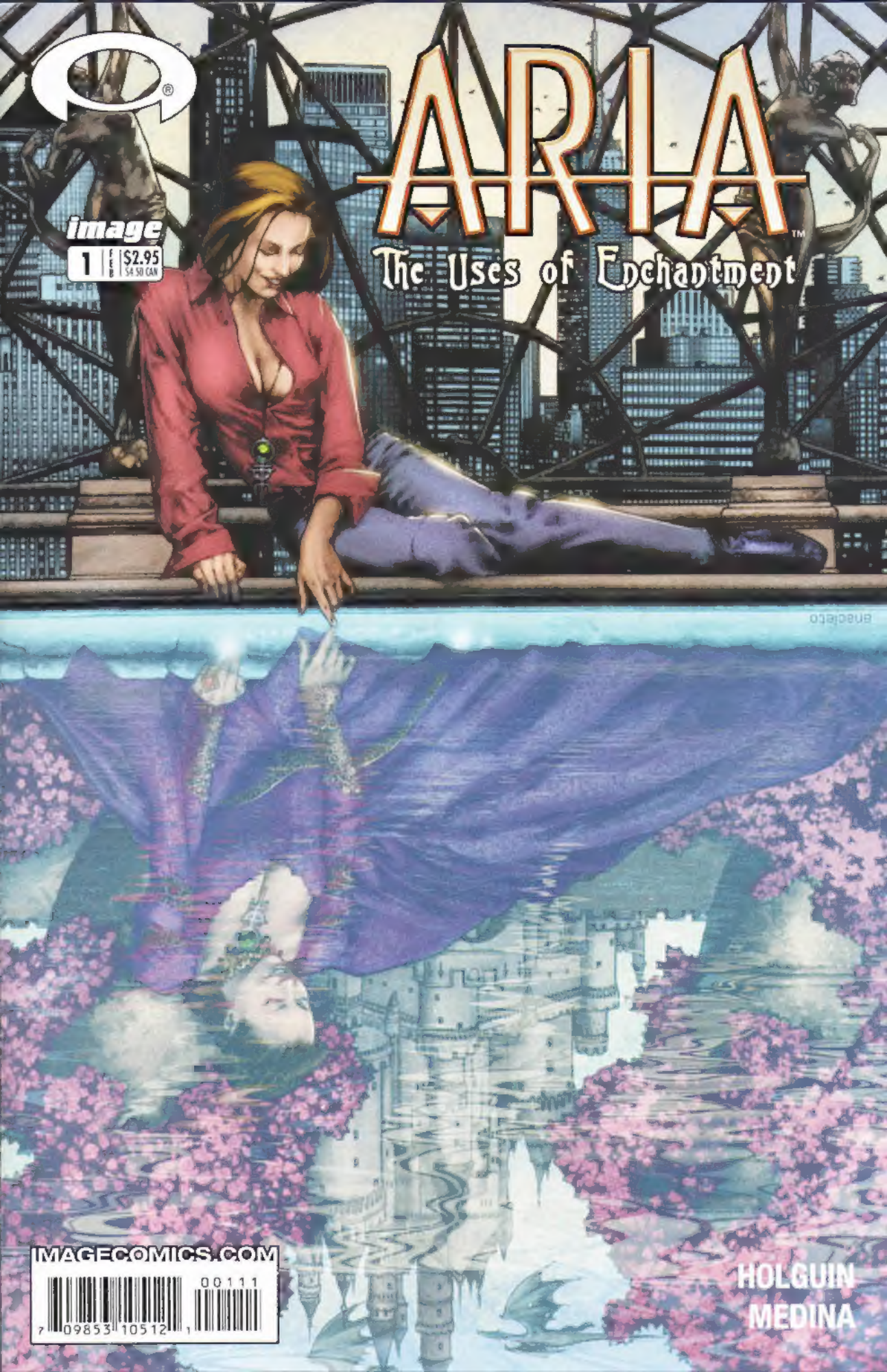


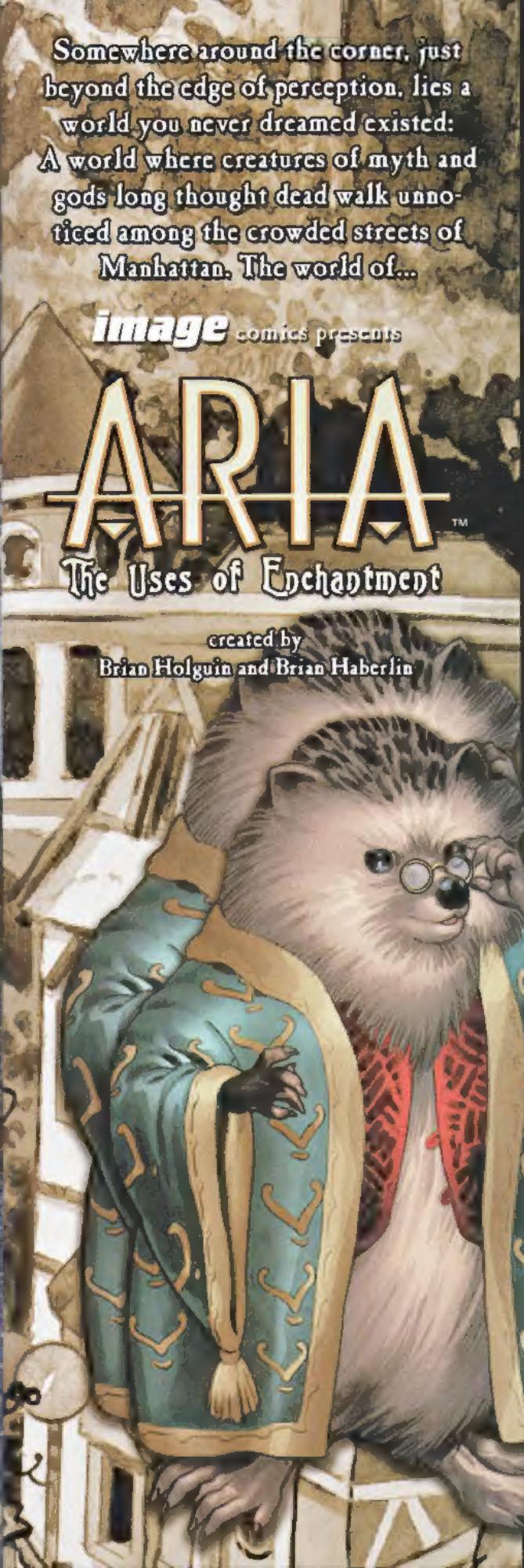
image
1
FEB
$2.95
$4.50 CAN
ARIA
The Uses of Enchantment
IMAGECOMICS.COM
00111
HOLGUIN
MEDINA

Kildare – A 900-year-old Faerie Princess who has chosen to live in the mortal world for the past several centuries. In her time she has danced with emperors, consorted with assassins and gotten blind drunk with rock stars. She has been painted by Rossetti, courted by Byron and had songs written about by Syd Barrett. She currently runs a bookstore/collectibles shop called Otherworlds in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan.

Ginny – Kildare's Cousin Gwynnion, also known as Ginny, was once the crown jewel of the Faerie Royal Court, a dazzling beauty blessed with exceptional wit and charm. At the turn of the 20th Century, Gwynnion was the victim of a brutal attack that drove her mad. Sweet, child-like and deeply damaged, Kildare makes a point to look after Ginny.

Pug – Descended from a long line of Dwarven warriors, Pug has fought as a mercenary the armies of Napoleon and Peter the Great, and flew missions for the RAF in the First World War. A being of great appetites, prodigious humor and ironclad loyalties, he is one of Kildare's closest and most loyal friends.

Ondine – A self-described Recovering Water Sprite, Ondine is fiercely independent and somewhat stubborn, despite the fact that she is still technically the "property" of a remote Bavarian Village. She ran off to America 20 years ago and has been one of Kildare's best friends and confidants ever since.


Somewhere around the corner, just beyond the edge of perception, lies a world you never dreamed existed: A world where creatures of myth and gods long thought dead walk unnoticed among the crowded streets of Manhattan. The world of...
image comics presents
ARIA™
The Uses of Enchantment
created by
Brian Holguin and Brian Haberlin

written by
Brian Holguin

art by
Lan Medina

coloring by
Steve Oliff
Andy Troy

lettering by
Dreamer Design

cover by
Jay Anacleto

Publisher
Jim Valentino

Director of Marketing
Eric Stephenson

Director of Production
Brent Braun

Controller
Traci Hale

Art Director
Brett Evans

Web Developer
Allen Hui

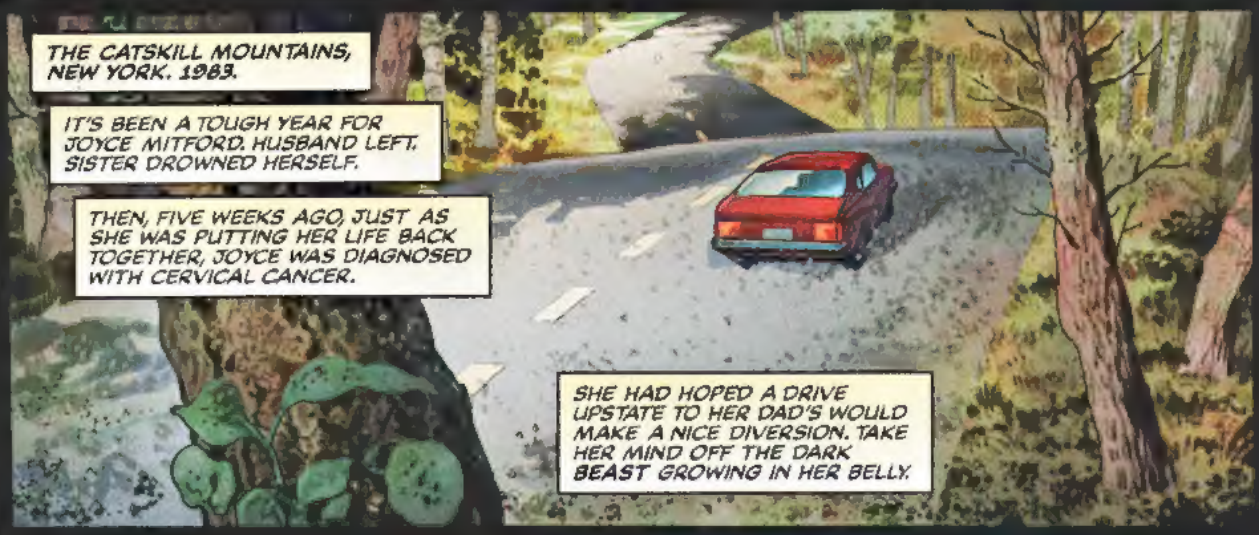
Accounting Asst.
Cindie Espinoza

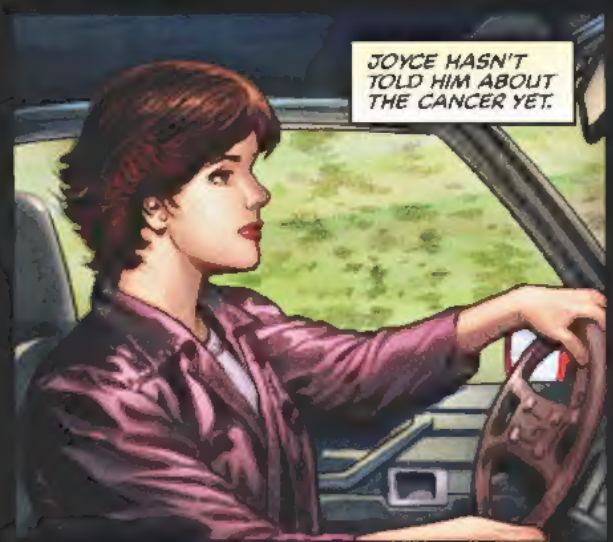
Traffic
Peter Mason Hauge

WWW.IMAGECOMICS.COM

ARIA: The Uses of Enchantment Vol. I, #1, February 2003. FIRST PRINTING. Published by Image Comics Inc. Office of Publication: 1071 N. Batavia St. Ste. A Orange, CA 92867. $2.95 US / $4.50 Canada. Image and it's logo are ™ and © Image Comics, Inc. 2003. All right reserved. ARIA: The Uses of Enchantment its logo and all related characters are trademark and copyright Brian Haberlin and Brian Holguin, Inc. 2002. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Any similarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reprinted without the express written consent of Brian Haberlin and Brian Holguin. PRINTED IN CANADA.

Welcome to...
ARIA
The Uses of Enchantment


THE CATSKILL MOUNTAINS, NEW YORK. 1983.
IT'S BEEN A TOUGH YEAR FOR JOYCE MITFORD. HUSBAND LEFT. SISTER DROWNED HERSELF.
THEN, FIVE WEEKS AGO, JUST AS SHE WAS PUTTING HER LIFE BACK TOGETHER, JOYCE WAS DIAGNOSED WITH CERVICAL CANCER.
SHE HAD HOPED A DRIVE UPSTATE TO HER DAD'S WOULD MAKE A NICE DIVERSION. TAKE HER MIND OFF THE DARK BEAST GROWING IN HER BELLY.

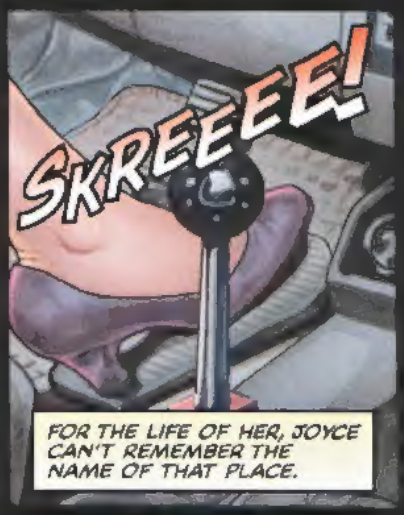

JOYCE HASN'T TOLD HIM ABOUT THE CANCER YET.

SHE HAS FOND MEMORIES OF THESE MOUNTAINS.

HER FATHER TOOK THEM ON TRIPS HERE WHEN SHE AND KERRI WERE KIDS. THERE WAS A FAVORITE PLACE THEY WOULD GO, SOMEWHERE NOT FAR OFF FROM HERE.
ONE OF THOSE STORYBOOK VILLAGES THAT DOTTED THE COUNTRY BACK IN THE DAYS BEFORE INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS AND THAT PLACE IN ANAHEIM PUT THEM ALL OUT OF BUSINESS.
SHE CAN STILL PICTURE IT: SWINGING FROM THE CANVAS LACES OF A MAMMOTH SHOE, HIDING IN COTTAGES MADE OF STRAW OR STICK OR STONE.

LAUGHING.

THERE WAS ALWAYS SO MUCH LAUGHING BACK THEN.


SKREEEE!
FOR THE LIFE OF HER, JOYCE CAN'T REMEMBER THE NAME OF THAT PLACE.

THOSE DAYS, HER LIFE AHEAD OF HER, THE WORLD SEEMED FULL OF MAGIC.
SHE'D GROW UP, MEET PRINCE CHARMING, AND GO RIDING OFF INTO A WATERCOLOR SUNSET.

OH.

BUT NOW, AS A BRIEF, SAD LIFE PARADES BEFORE HER EYES, JOYCE MITFORD CAN'T HELP WONDERING WHERE IT ALL WENT WRONG.

IT'S JUST NOT FAIR.
WHERE DID ALL THE MAGIC GO?

WHAT HAPPENED TO HER HAPPILY EVER AFTER...?

Aria:

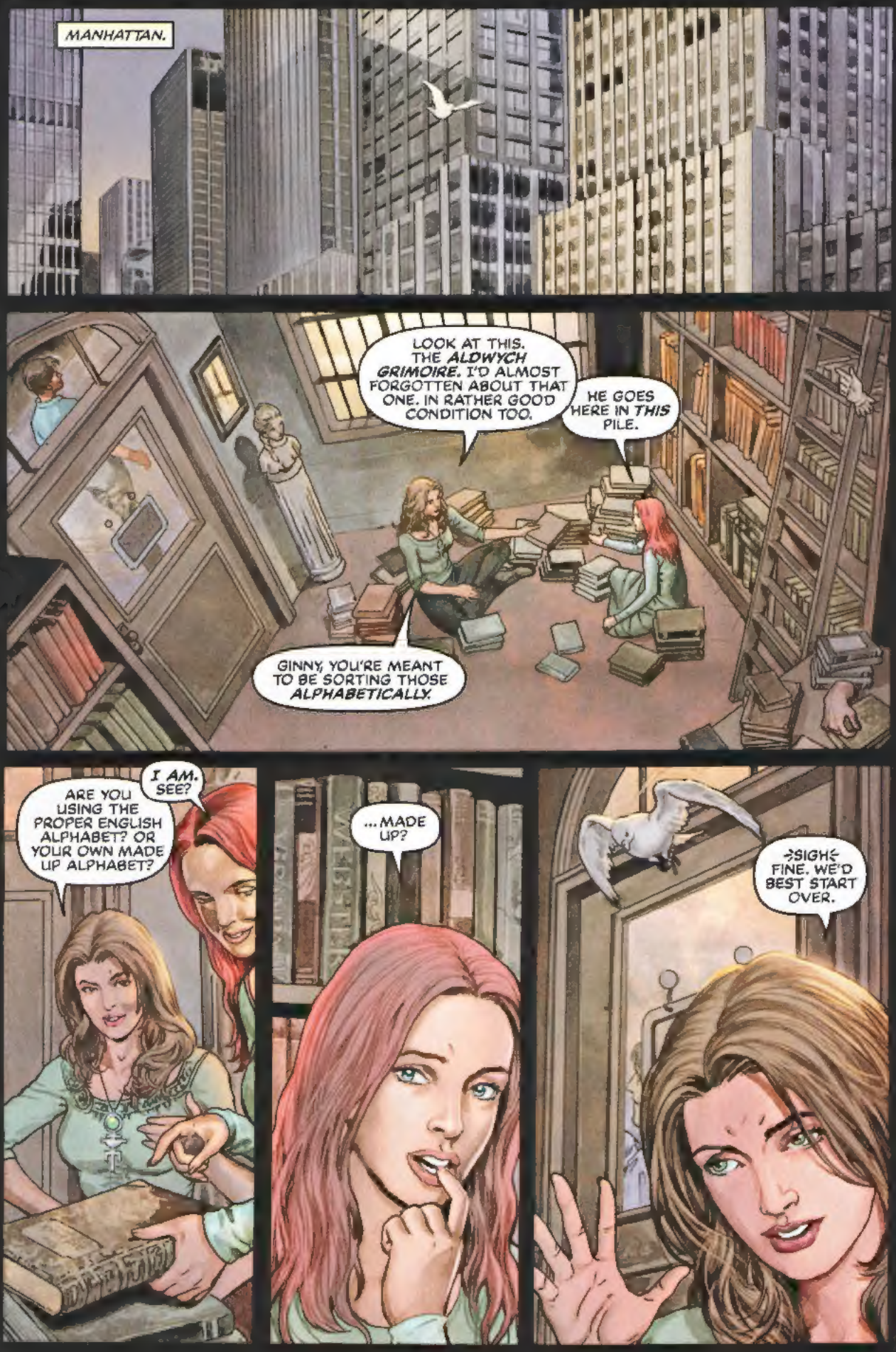
The Uses Of Enchantment

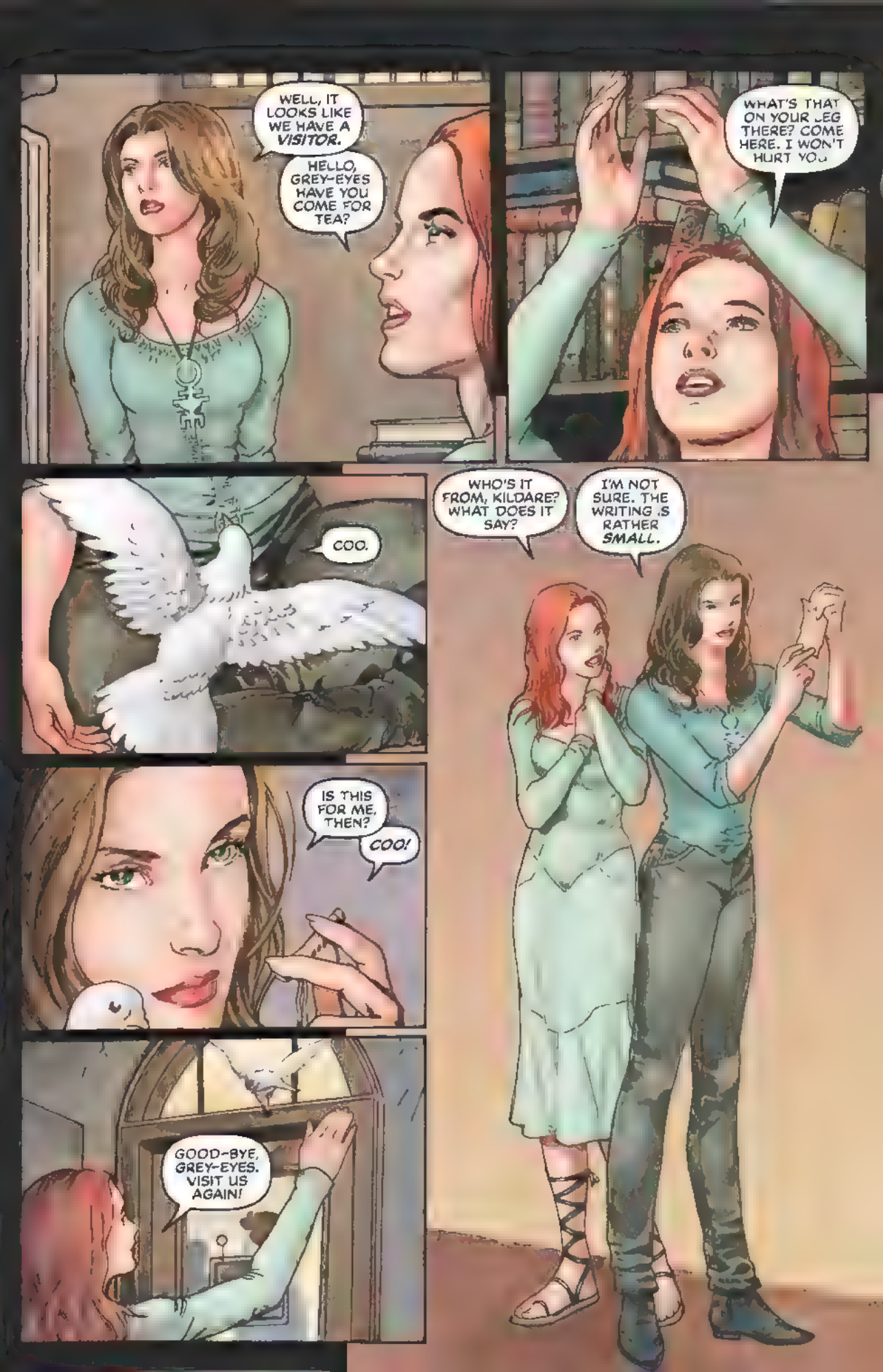
Part I Of IV

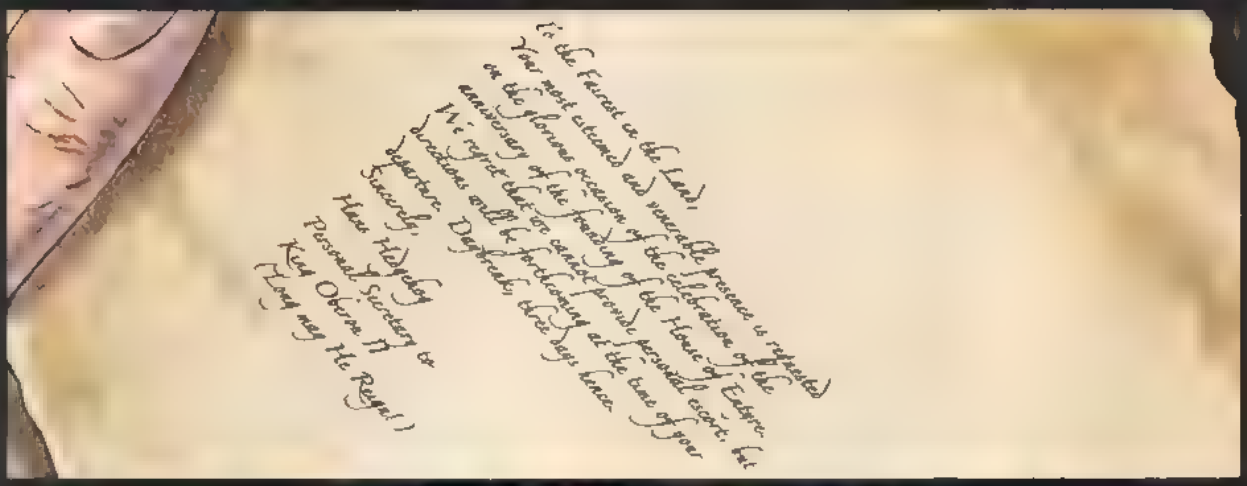
As told by...
Brian Holguin: story
Lan Medina: art
Haberlin Studios: colors
Dreamer Design: lettering

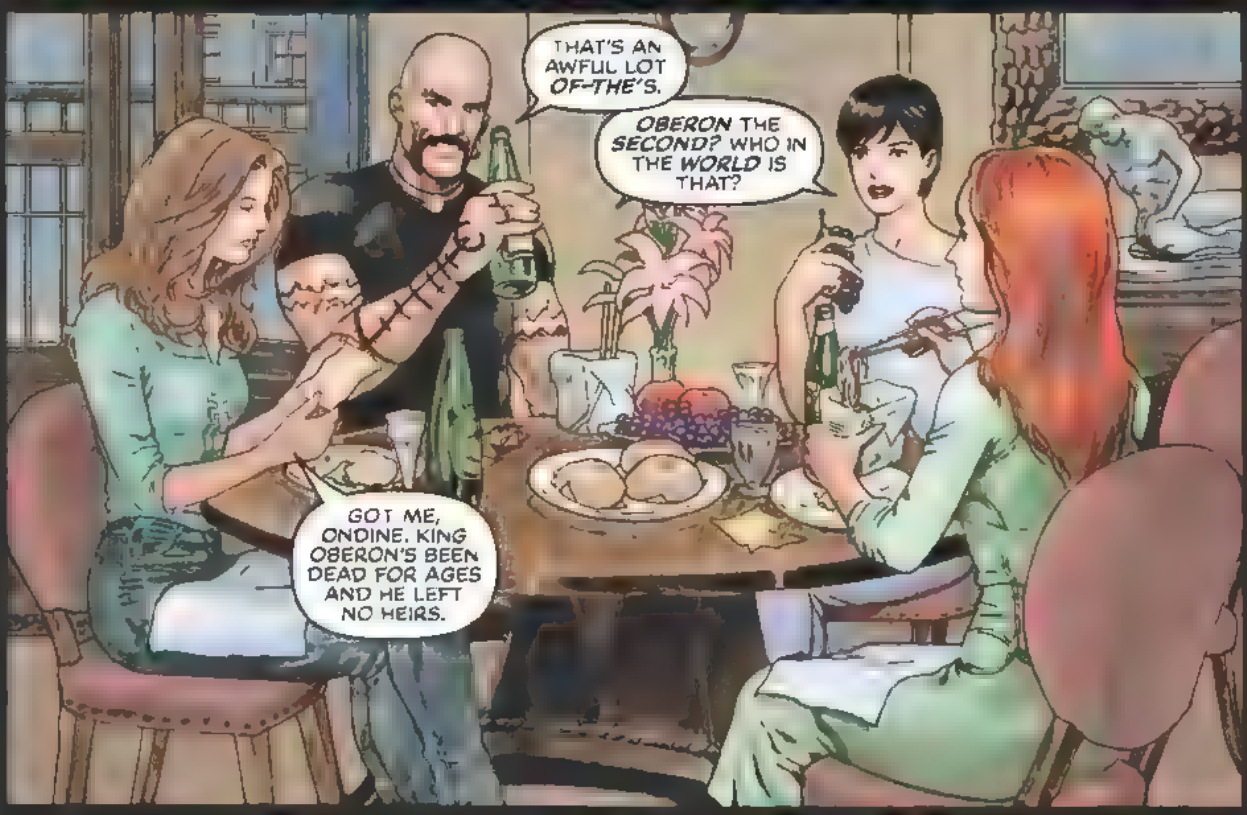
THE CASTLE. TODAY.
MUCH TO DO. SO MUCH TO DO.
THREE DAYS TILL THE FEAST AND THE INVITATIONS STILL NOT SENT.
COO
OFF YOU GO! THERE'S A GOOD GIRL!
HOW DO I GET MYSELF IN THESE SPOTS?

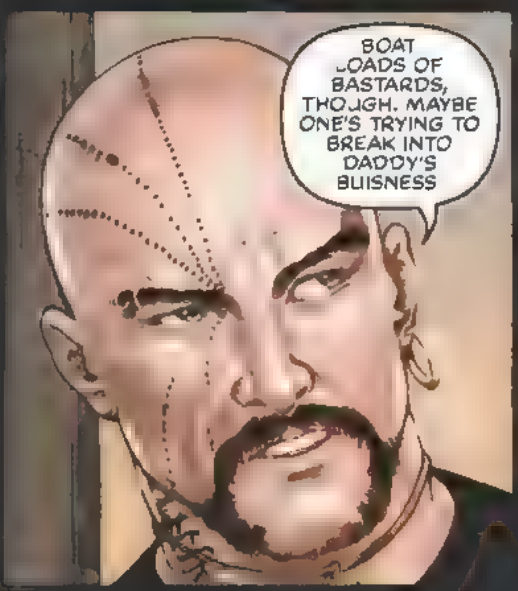
ONE... TWO... THREE... FOUR...
HANS MY HEDGEHOG KISSED A BULLFROG... RODE AN OST-RICH TO THE FAIR...
GOOD MORNING, EMBER.
OH, GOOD MORNING, HANS! HOW ARE YOU TODAY?
BUSY. QUITE BUSY. BE A GOOD CHILD AND DON'T TOUCH MY BOOKS AGAIN.
SORRY.
MUCH TO DO... SO MUCH TO DO.
SIX! DON'T LET THAT SUGAR BURN OR I'LL BAKE YOU IN A SOUFFLE!
YES'M.
PARDON ME, MADAM COOK...
NOT NOW, I'M BUSY!
THE FEAST IS IN THREE DAYS. WILL EVERYTHING BE READY IN TIME?
JUST MIGHT, IF YOU STOPPED PESTERING ME EVERY FIVE MINUTES. DON'T YOU FRET. ME AND ME BAKER'S DOZEN WILL GET THE JOB DONE.
NOW, GET OUT OF MY KITCHEN!
SPLENDID.


MANHATTAN.
LOOK AT THIS. THE ALDWYCH GRIMOIRE. I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN ABOUT THAT ONE. IN RATHER GOOD CONDITION TOO.
HE GOES HERE IN THIS PILE.
GINNY, YOU'RE MEANT TO BE SORTING THOSE ALPHABETICALLY.
ARE YOU USING THE PROPER ENGLISH ALPHABET? OR YOUR OWN MADE UP ALPHABET?
I AM. SEE?
...MADE UP?
>SIGH< FINE. WE'D BEST START OVER.


WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE A VISITOR.
HELLO, GREY-EYES HAVE YOU COME FOR TEA?
WHAT'S THAT ON YOUR LEG THERE? COME HERE. I WON'T HURT YOU
COO.
WHO'S IT FROM, KILDARE? WHAT DOES IT SAY?
I'M NOT SURE. THE WRITING IS RATHER SMALL.
IS THIS FOR ME, THEN?
COO!
GOOD-BYE, GREY-EYES. VISIT US AGAIN!


To the Fairest of the Land,
Your most esteemed and venerable presence is requested
on the glorious occasion of the celebration of the
anniversary of the founding of the House of Eadgyo.
We regret that we cannot provide personal escort, but
directions will be forthcoming at the time of your
departure. Daybreak three days hence.
Sincerely,
Hans Holyoday
Personal Secretary to
King Oberon II
(Long may He Reign!)


THAT'S AN AWFUL LOT OF-THE'S.
OBERON THE SECOND? WHO IN THE WORLD IS THAT?
GOT ME, ONDINE. KING OBERON'S BEEN DEAD FOR AGES AND HE LEFT NO HEIRS.


BOAT LOADS OF BASTARDS, THOUGH. MAYBE ONE'S TRYING TO BREAK INTO DADDY'S BUISNESS

HEY... IT JUST SAYS "TO THE FAIREST IN THE LAND" RIGHT? SO HOW DO WE KNOW THAT MEANS YOU?
YEAH

WELL, IT DID LAND IN MY LAP.
OH! SO THE BIRD GETS TO DECIDE?
YEAH, LIKE THAT'S OFFICIAL.
CALM DOWN, LADIES, THERE'S ENOUGH GOLDEN APPLES FOR EVERYONE.
QUESTION IS, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?
YOU'RE NOT GOING ARE YOU? IT COULD BE ANYTHING. A TRAP. A GAME. A BLOODY KIDNAPPING PLOT.
I KNOW, PUG. IT DOESN'T EVEN SAY WHERE. JUST THAT "DIRECTIONS WILL BE FORTHCOMING." WHATEVER THAT MEANS.
SO... SO YOU'RE NOT EVEN GOING TO SEE WHAT IT'S ABOUT?
IT COULD BE AN ADVENTURE, KILDARE. YOU LIKE ADVENTURES.
WELL, IT DOESN'T SOUND DANGEROUS, DOES IT? THE HOUSE OF ENTYRE? SOMETHING ABOUT IT... IT ALMOST SOUNDS FAMILIAR.
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD AT LEAST CONSIDER...
OH, WHO ARE WE BLOODY KIDDING? YOU'VE ALREADY MADE UP YOUR MIND, HAVEN'T YOU?
JUST PROMISE TO GIVE A SHOUT IF THINGS GET DODGY. NOW PASS THE KUNG-PAO, WOULDJA?

WHEN THE STARLING SINGS FOR THE ERL-KING. WHEN THE RED LEAVES START TO FALL...
WHEN THE HUNT LORD'S HORN IS LOUDLY BLOWN, AND IT THUNDERS DOWN THE--
HALL
OH DEAR
PARDON ME. HAVE YOU SEEN MY BAUBLE?
IS IT GOLD? DOES IT SHINE LIKE THE SUN?
IT'S MINE NOW. BUT YOU CAN HAVE IT BACK...
IF YOU OPEN THE DOOR...
OPEN THE DOOR? WHAT SORT OF FOOL DO YOU THINK ME?
I MAY BE A LITTLE GIRL, BUT EVEN I KNOW YOU NEVER LET THE BEAST OUT OF HIS CAGE!
BESIDES, I'VE GOT LOTS OF THEM, SEE?

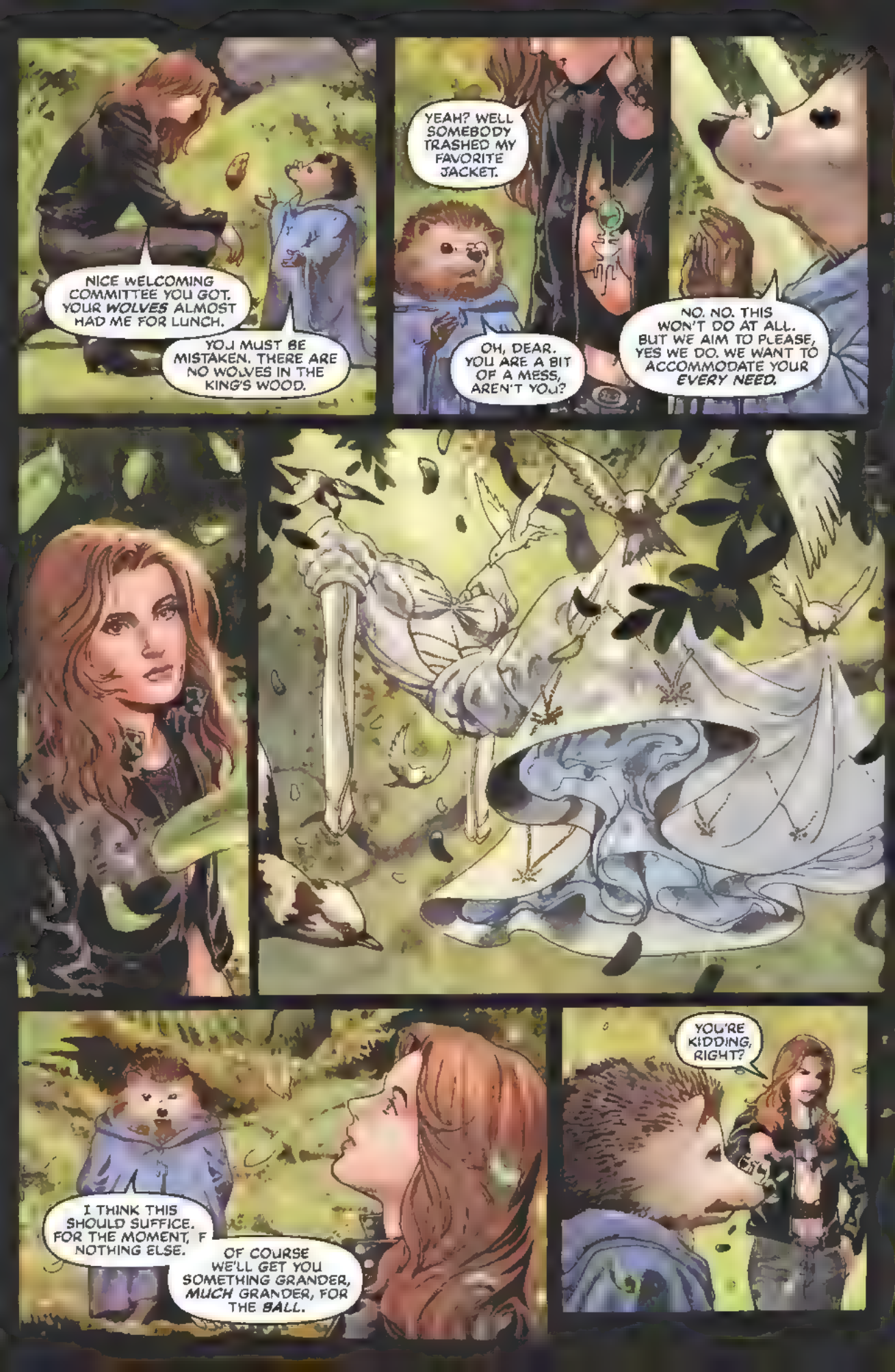
PULL OVER HERE.
LOOKS LIKE THIS IS MY STOP.
EXCUSE ME WHERE AM I?
I DON'T KNOW. SOMEWHERE IN THE CATSKILLS, I THINK.
OH.
SO, INTO THE WOODS IS IT?
COO.

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE LIVED IN A CERTAIN VILLAGE A LITTLE COUNTRY GIRL, THE PRETTIEST CREATURE WHO WAS EVER SEEN.
HER MOTHER WAS EXCESSIVELY FOND OF HER AND HER GRANDMOTHER DOTED ON HER STILL MORE.
THIS GOOD WOMAN HAD A LITTLE *RED RIDING HOOD* MADE FOR HER.
ONE DAY, THE GIRL WENT ON A JOURNEY INTO THE DEEP WOODS THE REASON SHE DID SO, HER FRIENDS AGREED, WAS THIS:
THE GIRL WAS A COMPLETE AND UTTER *IMBECILE,* LACKING ALL JUDGMENT AND COMMON SENSE...
...AND THE SILLY BITCH QUITE LIKELY DESERVED WHATEVER SHE GOT

SHIT
AH!
GET OFF ME!
UFF!

YOU'RE NOT MADE OF FLESH, ARE YOU?
LOOK AT ME, YOU SON OF A BITCH.
LOOK AT ME!
¡BFGGG!

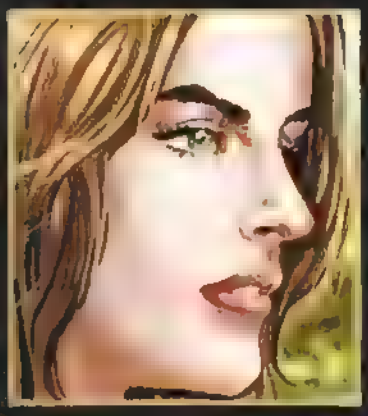
THAT' RIGHT. RUN YOU BASTARDS!
DAMN IT. AND I SWORE I WAS GOING TO QUIT.
HEY! WHO S THERE?
OH, YOU'RE HERE ALREADY. I WAS JUST LEAVING A TRAIL FOR YOU.
LET ME GUESS. YOU MUST BE HANS.
AT YOUR SERVICE.


NICE WELCOMING COMMITTEE YOU GOT. YOUR WOLVES ALMOST HAD ME FOR LUNCH.
YOU MUST BE MISTAKEN. THERE ARE NO WOLVES IN THE KING'S WOOD.
YEAH? WELL SOMEBODY TRASHED MY FAVORITE JACKET.
OH, DEAR. YOU ARE A BIT OF A MESS, AREN'T YOU?
NO. NO. THIS WON'T DO AT ALL. BUT WE AIM TO PLEASE, YES WE DO. WE WANT TO ACCOMMODATE YOUR EVERY NEED.
I THINK THIS SHOULD SUFFICE. FOR THE MOMENT, F NOTHING ELSE.
OF COURSE WE'LL GET YOU SOMETHING GRANDER, MUCH GRANDER, FOR THE BALL.
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?

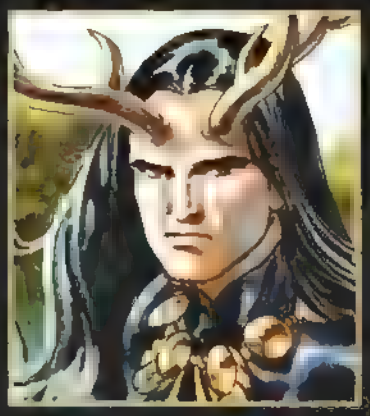
WOULDN'T IT BE EASIER IF I JUST THREW UP A GLAMOUR? YOU KNOW, SOMETHING IN A NICE VERSACE?
I THINK NOT. THE KING IS RATHER SENSITIVE WHEN IT COMES TO MATTERS OF ILLUSION.
OF COURSE HE IS.
SO HOW MUCH FURTHER?
NOT FAR AT ALL. JUST AROUND THE BEND.
HERE IT IS MY LADY. COME...

...KING OBERON IS WAITING.

ARIA
The Uses of Enchantment
2
$2.95
IMAGECOMICS.COM



Kildare A 900-year-old Faerie Princess who has chosen to live in the mortal world for the past several centuries. In her time she has danced with emperors, consorted with assassins and gotten blind drunk with rock stars. She has been painted by Rossetti, courted by Byron and had songs written about by Syd Barrett. She currently runs a bookstore/collectibles shop called Otherworlds in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan.



Hunter Personal aide and protector to the Queen, whom he protects jealously.

Ember The ward of the King. Ember is a young girl with a bright and sunny disposition, despite the fact that she is perpetually on fire.

The Beast A terrible monster that dwells in the deepest dungeons of The Castle.

Hans A talking hedgehog with a nervous disposition. Hans is the personal secretary of King Oberon II and responsible for the day to day operation of The Castle. He is also charged with preparing for Kildare's arrival to the Kingdom.

Somewhere around the corner, just beyond the edge of perception, lies a world you never dreamed existed: A world where creatures of myth and gods long thought dead walk unnoticed among the crowded streets of Manhattan. The world of...

image comics presents

ARIA

The Uses of Enchantment

created by
Brian Holguin and Brian Haberlin

written by
Brian Holguin

art by
Lan Medina

coloring by
Steve Oliff

lettering by
Dreamer Design

cover by
Jay Anacleto

Publisher
Jim Valentino

Director of Marketing
Eric Stephenson

Director of Production
Brent Braun

Sales/Author/Foreign Licensing
Traci Hale

Art Director
Brett Evans

Web Developer
Allen Hui

Accounting Assistant
Cindie Espinoza

Book Trade Coordinator
Tim Hegarty

WWW.IMAGECOMICS.COM

ARIA: The Uses of Enchantment Vol. 1, #2. April 2003. FIRST PRINTING. Published by: Image Comics Inc. Office of Publication: 1071 N. Batavia St. Ste. A Orange, CA 92867. $2.95 US / $4.50 Canada.

Image and its logos are ® and © 2003 Image Comics, Inc. ARIA: The Uses of Enchantment, its logo and all related characters are trademark and copyright Brian Haberlin and Brian Holguin, Inc. 2002. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Any similarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reprinted without the express written consent of Brian Haberlin and Brian Holguin.
PRINTED IN CANADA.

Previously...

Twenty Years Ago: Joyce Mitford, recently divorced and diagnosed with terminal cancer drives through the back roads of the Catskill Mountains of New York. She reminisces about better times; thinking back to a storybook theme park called the Kingdom of Enchantment that she often visited as a child. Caught off guard by a stag in the road, Joyce swerves and sends her car careening down a rocking slope. As she lay dying, a mysterious figure emerges from the woods, pulls her from the wreckage and carries her back to the ruins of the Kingdom of Enchantment.

The Present: A mysterious letter addressed to "The Fairest in the Land" is literally dropped into Kildare's lap. It invites her to visit a feast in honor of the King Oberon II, a person she has never heard of. Despite some reservations and the warnings of her friends, Kildare decides to investigate the matter. She is lead upstate to the Catskills where she enters the forest. Unknown to her, Kildare is a shadowed by a mysterious antlered woodsman called the Hunter and is later set upon a trio of supernatural wolves. Just when she manages to defeat her attackers, Kildare is greeted by Hans, the King's secretary. He presents her with a magnificent gown and tells her that King Oberon is waiting for her. He then leads her out of the wood where she is greeted by a stunning sight: A genuine magic kingdom secreted away in upstate New York.

THE CASTLE.
"HELP!"
"OH, WRETCHEDNESS! I FIND MYSELF MOST WOEFULLY INCONVENIENCED BY THIS CONVEYANCE!"
"WON'T SOMEBODY PLEASE COME TO MY AID?"
"NEVER FEAR, SWEET MAIDEN! I HAVE HEARD YOUR DESPERATE PLEAS ECHOING ACROSS WORLDS! I SHALL DELIVER YOU FROM YOUR IRKSOME FATE!"
"OH, BLESS YOU, YOU KIND AND HANDSOME STRANGER. HOW CAN I EVER THANK YOU?"
"COME AWAY WITH ME AND BE MY LOVE. AND FOREVER AFTER SHALL WE LIVE IN HAPPINESS!"
HOORAY! HOORAY!
HUH? WHAT'S THAT RUCKUS!
OH MY!
SHE'S HERE!

APIA: The Ules of Enchantment
PART II OF IV
HERE WE ARE... WELCOME TO OUR LITTLE KINGDOM!
THANKS.

HURRY ALONG NOW. WE'RE RUNNING A BIT LATE AND THERE'S STILL SO MUCH TO DO!
WELCOME, MA'AM.
CHEERS, M'LADY.
AH! I SEE OUR HONORED GUEST HAS ARRIVED.
WELCOME, MY LADY. I AM CALLED HUNTER. PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF I MIGHT BE OF SERVICE DURING YOUR STAY.
NOT NOW, HUNTER. SOME OF US HAVE A SCHEDULE TO ADHERE TO.
FORMAL INTRODUCTIONS WILL BE MADE LATER.
YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING IN YOUR HAIR THERE, HUNTER.
YOU WEREN'T OUT PLAYING IN THE WOODS, WERE YOU?

WHO IS THAT HUNTER PERSON?
HMM? NO ONE IMPORTANT. HE BELONGS TO THE QUEEN. NOW, FOLLOW ME.
THIS, OF COURSE, IS THE GREAT HALL. THE FEAST IS AT SUNDOWN, SO THERE ISN'T TIME FOR THE GRAND TOUR AT THE MOMENT.
ON A GIVEN DAY, THERE CAN BE ANYWHERE FROM 70 TO 900 ROOMS, DEPENDING ON THE KING'S WHIMS.
I'M STILL NOT CLEAR WHY I'M HERE.
THERE'S TIME ENOUGH FOR EXISTENTIALISM LATER, MY DEAR GIRL. FOR NOW...
ALLOW ME, IF I MIGHT BE SO BOLD... TO WELCOME YOU TO OUR HUMBLE A-BODE.
THOUGH THIS CASTLE, IT MAY SEEM... IS NO MORE YIELDING THAN A DREAM... WE THINK THAT YOU'LL AGREE IT'S AS GOOD AS GOLD!
JUST LOOK UPON THIS SHINING EDIFICE... EVERY INCH OF IT DESIGNED TO IMPRESS...
EVERY COLUMN, EVERY BRACE, WAS CARVED WITH PEERLESS GRACE... EVERY BRICK AND EVERY STONE FROM THE DUNGEON TO THE DOME...

AND WE SINCERELY HOPE THAT YOU'LL MAKE YOURSELF AT--
WHOA! CUT! STOP!
YES. YES. WHAT IS IT?
PLEASE! I'VE JUST BEEN ASSAULTED BY WOLVES. I DON'T THINK I CAN HANDLE A MUSICAL NUMBER.
OH. WELL. FINE. I MEAN IT IS CUSTOMARY, BUT YOU ARE THE GUEST. WHATEVER YOU DESIRE.
EVEN IF I DID SPEND WEEKS WORKING ON IT. IT BUILDS TO A WONDERFUL CRESCENDO, NOT THAT YOU WOULD CARE
SORRY. MAYBE LATER, HUH?
OH MY!

IS THIS HER? IS IT?
YES, EMBER THIS IS SHE.
OH, YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL!
THANK YOU.
KILDARE THIS IS EMBER. EMBER, KILDARE.
IT'S A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, EMBER.
HOW DO YOU DO?
VERY WELL, THANK YOU. DID YOU KNOW YOU'RE ON FIRE?
YES, MAAM. THANK YOU FOR NOTICING!
COME NOW. I'LL TAKE YOU TO YOUR CHAMBER. THE SEAMSTRESS WILL FIT YOU FOR A NEW GOWN.
CALLOOH! CALLAY!

THE FEAST.

LADIES, GENTLEMEN... BEASTS, BIPEDS AND MISCELLANEOUS... *EVERYONE!* PLEASE, TAKE YOUR SEATS.

MAY I PRESENT, *KING OBERON THE SECOND*, SOVEREIGN OF THE *ENCHANTED REALMS*...

PROTECTOR OF THE NEVER ENDING DREAM, HIGH LORD OF THE *HOUSE OF ENTYRE*...

...WHOSE *GRACE* AND *WISDOM* GUIDES US ALL LIKE A BEACON IN THE NIGHT...

WELCOME! ONE AND ALL!

MY LIEGE, HONORED GUESTS... MAY I PRESENT TO YOU... LADY *KILDARE*...

PRINCESS OF THE FAR LANDS, *HEIR* TO THE HOUSE OF DANNAN AND GRAND DAME OF *GREENWICH VILLAGE*...

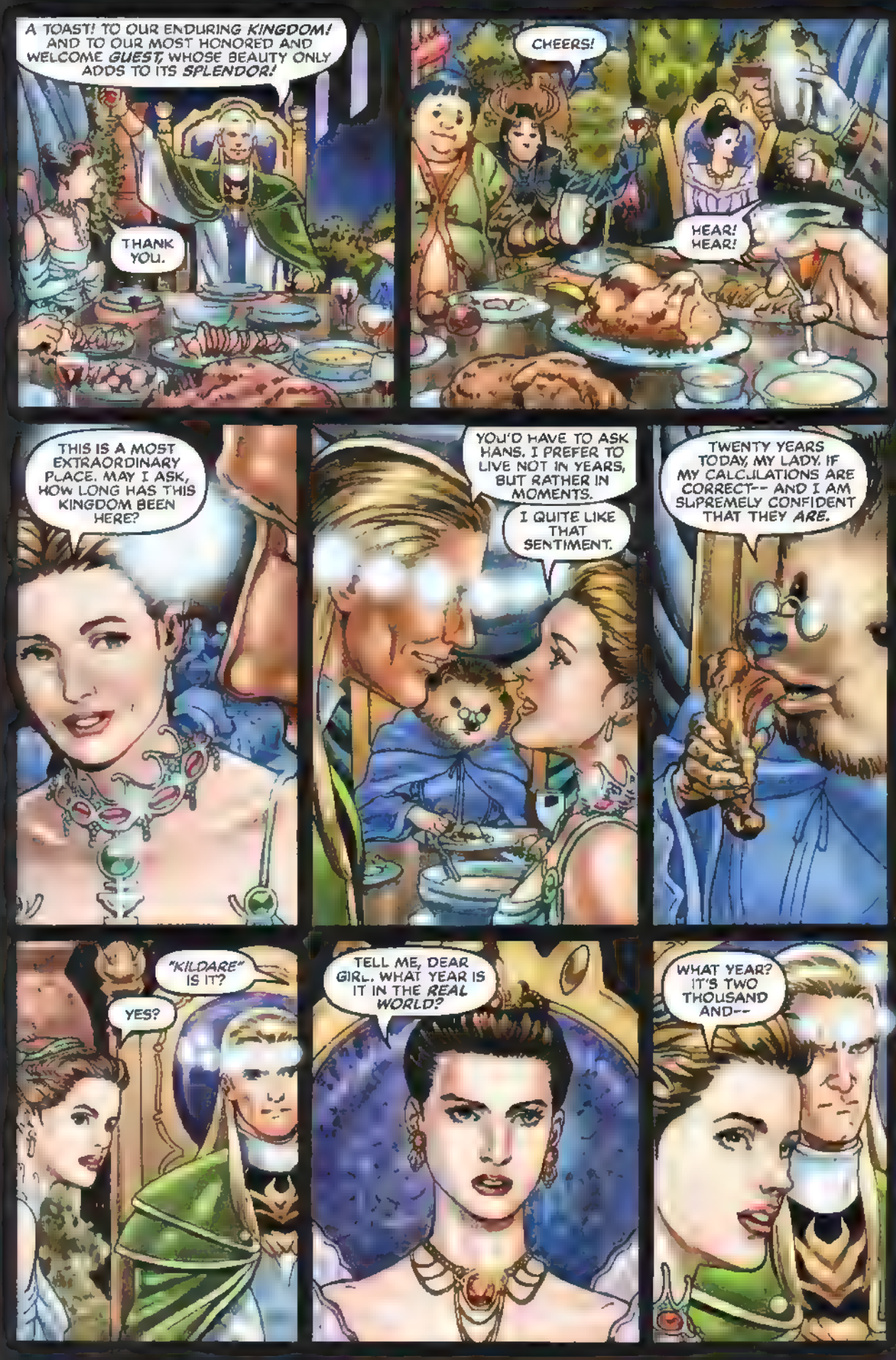
KILDARE, YOU HAVE GROWN SO *BEAUTIFUL*.

I REMEMBER YOU WHEN YOU WERE JUST A GIRL, RUNNING BAREFOOT THROUGH THE RAINBOW SPRINGS. YOU ALWAYS LIKED TO LAUGH, DIDN'T YOU?

HAVE WE MET? I'M SORRY. I DON'T REMEMBER YOU.

YOU WERE A CHILD WHEN LAST I SAW YOU. IN OBERON'S... IN MY *FATHER'S* HALL.
AH, I SEE THE REST OF OUR PARTY HAS ARRIVED.
LADY KILDARE, MAY I PRESENT MY WIFE... *QUEEN JOYOUS.*
IT IS A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, YOUR HIGHNESS.
COME. LET US BE SEATED. WE HAVE SO MUCH TO DISCUSS.

I HOPE YOU FIND EVERYTHING TO SATISFACTION.
IT'S WONDERFUL. I'M HONORED TO BE INVITED.
THE HONOR IS *ENTIRELY* OUR OWN.
SPEAKING OF WHICH... I'M FAMILIAR WITH THE THREE GREAT HOUSES OF FAERIE: THE OBERON, THE HOUSE OF LLYR, THE HOUSE OF DANNAN.
BUT I CONFESS I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THE *HOUSE OF ENTYRE.*
THANK YOU. AND I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF KING OBERON HAVING AN HEIR. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN HIDING YOURSELF?
OH, I TRAVELED A GREAT DEAL BEFORE THE FOUNDING OF THE KINGDOM. WE KEEP OURSELVES TO OURSLEVES MOST OF THE TIME.
YOU'RE SURE WE'VE MET BEFORE? I'D LIKE TO THINK I'D REMEMBER.
IT WAS LONG AGO. I'VE GROWN UP MUCH SINCE THEN.
MMM. I SUPPOSE THAT MUST BE IT.


A TOAST! TO OUR ENDURING KINGDOM! AND TO OUR MOST HONORED AND WELCOME GUEST, WHOSE BEAUTY ONLY ADDS TO ITS SPLENDOR!
THANK YOU.
CHEERS!
HEAR! HEAR!
THIS IS A MOST EXTRAORDINARY PLACE. MAY I ASK, HOW LONG HAS THIS KINGDOM BEEN HERE?
YOU'D HAVE TO ASK HANS. I PREFER TO LIVE NOT IN YEARS, BUT RATHER IN MOMENTS.
I QUITE LIKE THAT SENTIMENT.
TWENTY YEARS TODAY, MY LADY. IF MY CALCULATIONS ARE CORRECT-- AND I AM SUPREMELY CONFIDENT THAT THEY ARE.
"KILDARE" IS IT?
YES?
TELL ME, DEAR GIRL. WHAT YEAR IS IT IN THE REAL WORLD?
WHAT YEAR? IT'S TWO THOUSAND AND--

THERE SHALL BE NO TALK OF THE OUTER HELLS!
GULP
WHIMPER
NOW, WHERE WERE WE?
DO YOU REMEMBER THAT MAD FEUD BETWEEN MAB AND TITANIA? BELIEVE IT OR NOT, IT ALL STARTED OVER A GOOSEBERRY TART..

IS YOUR NAME CASPAR? MELCHIOR? BALTHAZAR?
NOPE. GUESS AGAIN.
SHORTRIBS? SHEEPSHANKS? LACELEG? AM I CLOSE?
MY DEAR LADY, WOULD YOU HONOR ME WITH A DANCE?
WELL...
WHAT THE HELL. IT'S JUST A DANCE, RIGHT?
NOT IF WE DO IT RIGHT.

TELL ME, MY DEAR. WHAT DIZZYING THOUGHTS ARE RACING THROUGH THAT QUICK MIND OF YOURS?
I'M THINKING THAT THERE'S A LOT YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME. AND I SUPPOSE I'M TORN BETWEEN *SOLVING* THE PUZZLE AND *ENJOYING* THE MYSTERY.
I VOTE FOR THE LATTER. A WISE MAN ONCE SAID, "*LIFE IS BUT A DREAM: BUT, OH, WHAT A WONDERFUL DREAM!*"
I CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT.
NEITHER CAN I.

THANK YOU. I REALLY ENJOYED THAT.
MY PLEASURE.
IT SEEMS THE QUEEN HAS TAKEN ILL. I SUPPOSE I'D BETTER SEE TO HER.
THERE'S MUCH I'D STILL LIKE TO DISCUSS. I WILL MEET YOU ON THE NORTH TERRACE LATER.
TILL THEN, EMBER WILL ATTEND TO YOU.
ENJOY THE REST OF THE FEAST. I WON'T BE LONG.
TAKE YOUR TIME.
HRMM...

THE DUNGEON.
PLEEASE... YOU... YOU LOVED ME ONCE.
THAT WAS BEFORE I KNEW THE TRUTH. BEFORE I KNEW WHAT YOU *WERE*.
PLEASE... LET ME OUT. I WON'T HURT YOU... I PROMISE...
PLEASE... *MOTHER*...
PERHAPS I WILL. ONE DAY.
BUT NOT TODAY.

DID YOU HAVE A GOOD TIME?
YEAH, I DID. I ALWAYS LIKED PLAYING DRESS UP. SO WHAT DO YOU CALL THIS GAME?
IT DOESN'T HAVE A NAME. DO YOU THINK IT NEEDS ONE?
OOH! LUCKY ROLL!
THAT MEANS I DRAW TWO CARDS AND...
THERE. THAT'S NINE POINTS FOR ME.
I ROLLED A SIX. IS THAT GOOD?
NO. I'M AFRAID YOU LOSE A TURN.
RATS.
EMBER... MAY I ASK, HOW OLD ARE YOU?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I MEAN, HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?
OH. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN HERE SINCE THE BEGINNING. I WAS ONE OF THE FIRST.

WHOA. WHAT WAS THAT? THE KING LOSE HIS TEMPER AGAIN?
RUMMMMMBLE
NO. THAT WAS THE *BEAST*. HE LIVES IN THE *DUNGEON*.
THE BEAST?
UH-HUH.
TELL ME ABOUT HIM.
WELL... HE'S THE QUEEN'S *SON*. HE WAS GROWING INSIDE HER. INSIDE HER *BELLY*. SHE THOUGHT IT WAS A *BABY*.
BUT IT WAS SOMETHING ELSE... *A MONSTER*.
THE QUEEN'S SON?
BUT *NOT* THE KING'S?
NOPE. HANS SAYS IT WAS QUITE A SCANDAL.
I TRUST *EMBER* HAS BEEN GOOD COMPANY.
DELIGHTFUL.
WOULD YOU EXCUSE US, PLEASE.
OKAY.
HOW'S THE QUEEN?
SHE'S IN A MOOD, OFF SULKING SOMEWHERE I IMAGINE.

TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK OF MY KINGDOM? IT IS BEAUTIFUL, IS IT NOT?
YES. IT'S ALL VERY LOVELY. BUT IT'S NOT REAL.
AND I KNOW YOU'RE NOT WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE.
OH?
AND I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER WHAT YOUR GAME IS.
MY GAME? DON'T BE SO CYNICAL. YOU OF ALL CREATURES SHOULD KNOW THAT THINGS ARE NO MORE OR LESS THAN WHAT YOU BELIEVE THEY ARE.
PERHAPS, TO A POINT.
IF YOU WANT TO LIVE IN A FANTASY, THAT'S YOUR BUSINESS. BUT WHY BRING ME INTO IT?
=SIGH= THE QUEEN... I MADE ALL THIS FOR HER.
ONLY SHE DOESN'T BELIEVE ANY MORE.

IT IS AS YOU FEARED, MY LADY. THE KING PLANS TO HAVE YOU *USURPED*.
YOU'VE TRIED *SCARING* THE LITTLE BITCH AWAY?
YES, LADY. IN THE WOODS. SHE'S STUBBORN.
VERY WELL.

THEN I SUPPOSE WE MUST KILL HER.

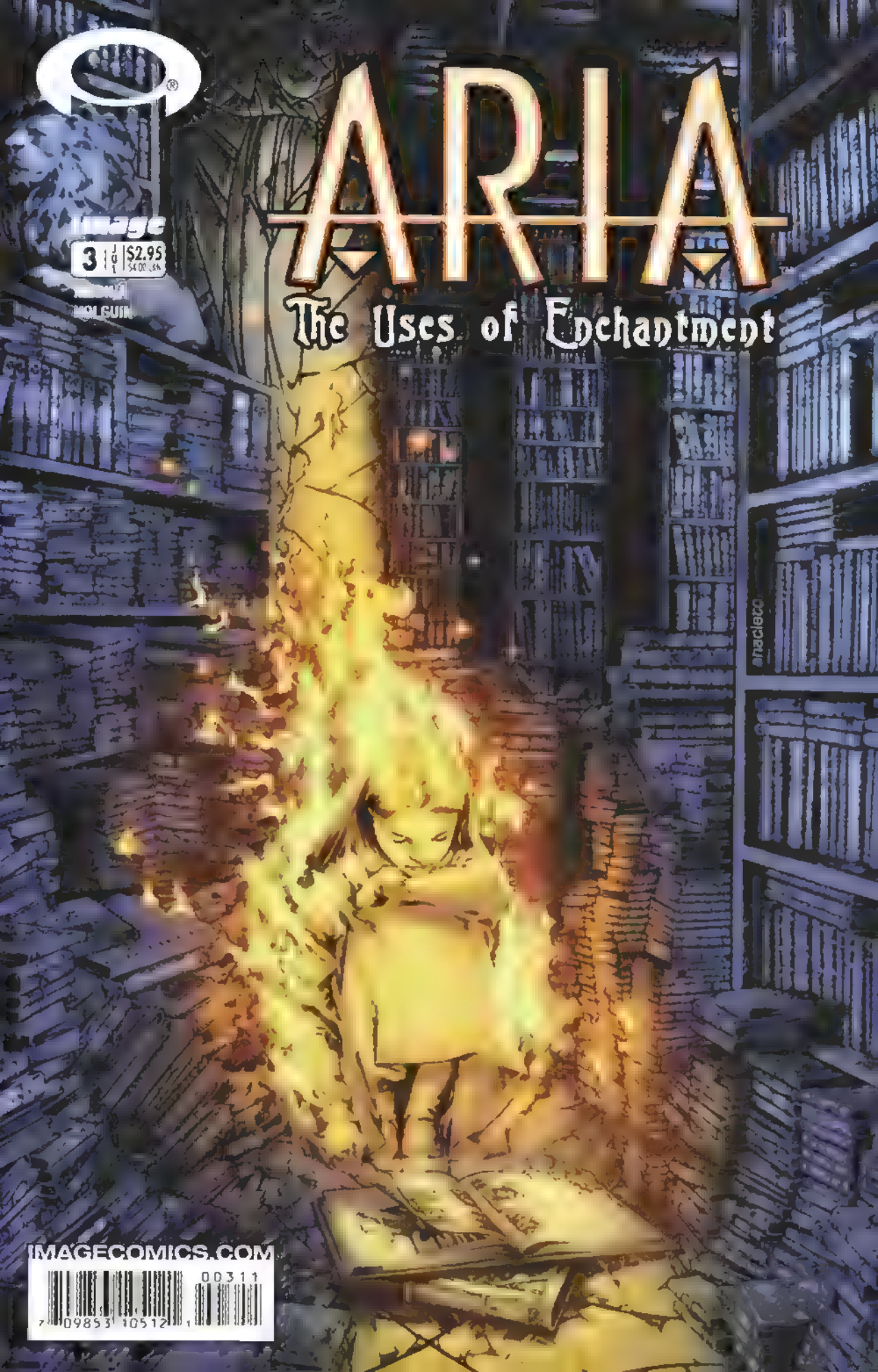


image
3
$2.95
ARIA
The Uses of Enchantment
anacleto
IMAGECOMICS.COM

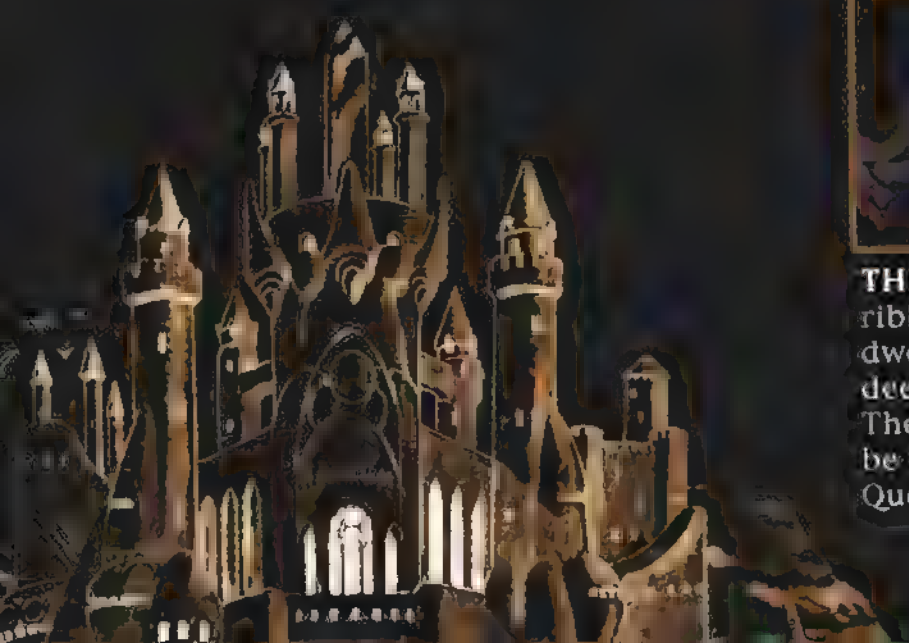
KILDARE – A 900-year-old Faerie Princess who has chosen to live in the mortal world for the past several centuries. In her time she has danced with emperors, consorted with assassins and gotten blind drunk with rock stars. She has been painted by Rossetti, courted by Byron and had songs written about by Syd Barrett. She currently runs a bookstore/collectibles shop called Otherworlds in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan.

THE KING – The monarch of the House of Entyre, he claims to be Oberon the Second, lost heir to the fabled king of Faerie.

QUEEN JOYOUS – The King's melancholy and distant wife.

HANS – Personal secretary of King Oberon II, responsible for the day to day operation of The Castle.

EMBER – The ward of the King. Ember is a young girl with a bright and sunny disposition, despite the fact that she is perpetually on fire.



THE BEAST – A terrible monster that dwells in the deepest dungeons of The Castle. Said to be the child of Queen Joyous.

Somewhere around the corner, just beyond the edge of perception, lies a world you never dreamed existed: A world where creatures of myth and gods long thought dead walk unnoticed among the crowded streets of Manhattan. The world of...

image comics presents

ARIA

The Uses of Enchantment

created by
Brian Holguin and Brian Haberlin

written by
Brian Holguin

art by
Lan Medina

coloring by
Steve Oliff
& Arsia Rozegar

lettering by
Avalon Studios

cover by
Jay Anacleto

Publisher
Jim Valentino

Director of Marketing
Eric Stephenson

Director of Production
Brent Braun

Controller
Traci Hale

Art Director
Brett Evans

Web Developer
Allen Nui

Accounting Asst.
Cindie Espineza

Book Trade Coordinator
Tim Hegarty

WWW.IMAGECOMICS.COM

ARIA: The Uses of Enchantment Vol. 1, #0, July 2003. FIRST PRINTING. Published by Image Comics Inc. Office of Publication: 1071 N. Batavia St. Ste. A Orange, CA 92867 $2.95 US / $4.10 Canada. Image and its logos are ® and © 2003 Image Comics, Inc. ARIA: The Uses of Enchantment its logo and all related characters are trademark and copyright Brian Haberlin and Brian Holguin, Inc. 2002. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Any similarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reprinted without the express written consent of Brian Haberlin and Brian Holguin.
PRINTED IN CANADA.

Previously...

Twenty Years Ago: Joyce Mitford, recently divorced and diagnosed with terminal cancer drives through the back roads of the Catskill Mountains of New York. She reminisces about better times; thinking back to a storybook theme park called the Kingdom of Enchantment that she often visited as a child. Caught off guard by a stag in the road, Joyce swerves and sends her car careening down a rocking slope. As she lay dying, a mysterious figure emerges from the woods, pulls her from the wreckage and carries her back to the ruins of the Kingdom of Enchantment.

The Present: A mysterious letter addressed to "The Fairest in the Land" is literally dropped into Kildare's lap. Despite some reservations and the warnings of her friends, Kildare decides to investigate the matter. She is lead upstate to the Catskills where she enters the forest and is set upon by a trio of supernatural wolves. After surviving the attack, Kildare is led to a stunning sight: A genuine magic kingdom secreted away in upstate New York. There she is feted as guest of honor at magnificent feast and is doted upon by the mysterious King Oberon II, much to the dismay of the king's icy wife, Queen Joyous. In a private meeting, Kildare confronts the King, telling him she doesn't believe that he is descended from Oberon and wants to know what secrets he is keeping. Meanwhile, the Queen summons her bodyguard, Hunter, and tells him that Kildare must die.

Dearest darling Pug--
Greetings from the land of Make-Believe. I know I've been away longer than I planned, but it couldn't be helped. So here I am, "honored guest" of the House of Entyre.
You won't believe this place. I feel like I've done a full-on "Zelig" into a Disney feature. The place is filled with all kinds of strange little creatures.
Like Ember, a sweet little girl who looks like Tenniel's Alice dunked in Napalm. Or Hans, an annoying little martinet of a Hedgehog. And then there's the KING.
Oberon II, he calls himself, although it's clear as day he's no more related to the Faerie King than my postman. He claims that we met when I was a girl, but I have no memory of it. Still, there is something familiar about him. Something sad.
The King likes to take me on long walks through this candy colored wonderland, while invisible minstrels sing his praises. I'm treated to all manner of diversions--
Dinners, masks, opera--
all in my honor.

The whole exercise is a fairly transparent attempt to make the Queen jealous, although I'm not sure why he bothers.

She's a stern, icy little bitch with a frozen broomstick up her butt— Someone who speaks little but pouts volumes.

She has a gloomy bodyguard called Hunter who smells like moss and tree sap and looks like trouble.

Believe me, I've tried. Whenever I ask someone about the outside world, their eyes glaze over and they pretend to have no idea what I'm talking about.

I tried to trace my way back through the woods but no matter how I chart the stars, no matter what direction charms I cast, I always end up back where I started.

Now, none of this would be so bad except for one thing: I can't seem to leave.

So I figured it was time to call in the marines. I'm not exactly sure where I am— just head up through the Catskills and veer left at reality.

Seriously, it shouldn't be hard to find, provided you're looking for it.

There is strong magic, here. Old Magic. this enchantment has been bound with either blood or sorrow. Maybe both.

COME HERE, GRAY EYES.

I WANT YOU TO TAKE THIS, TO THE SHOP, WHERE YOU FIRST BROUGHT ME THE INVITATION.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

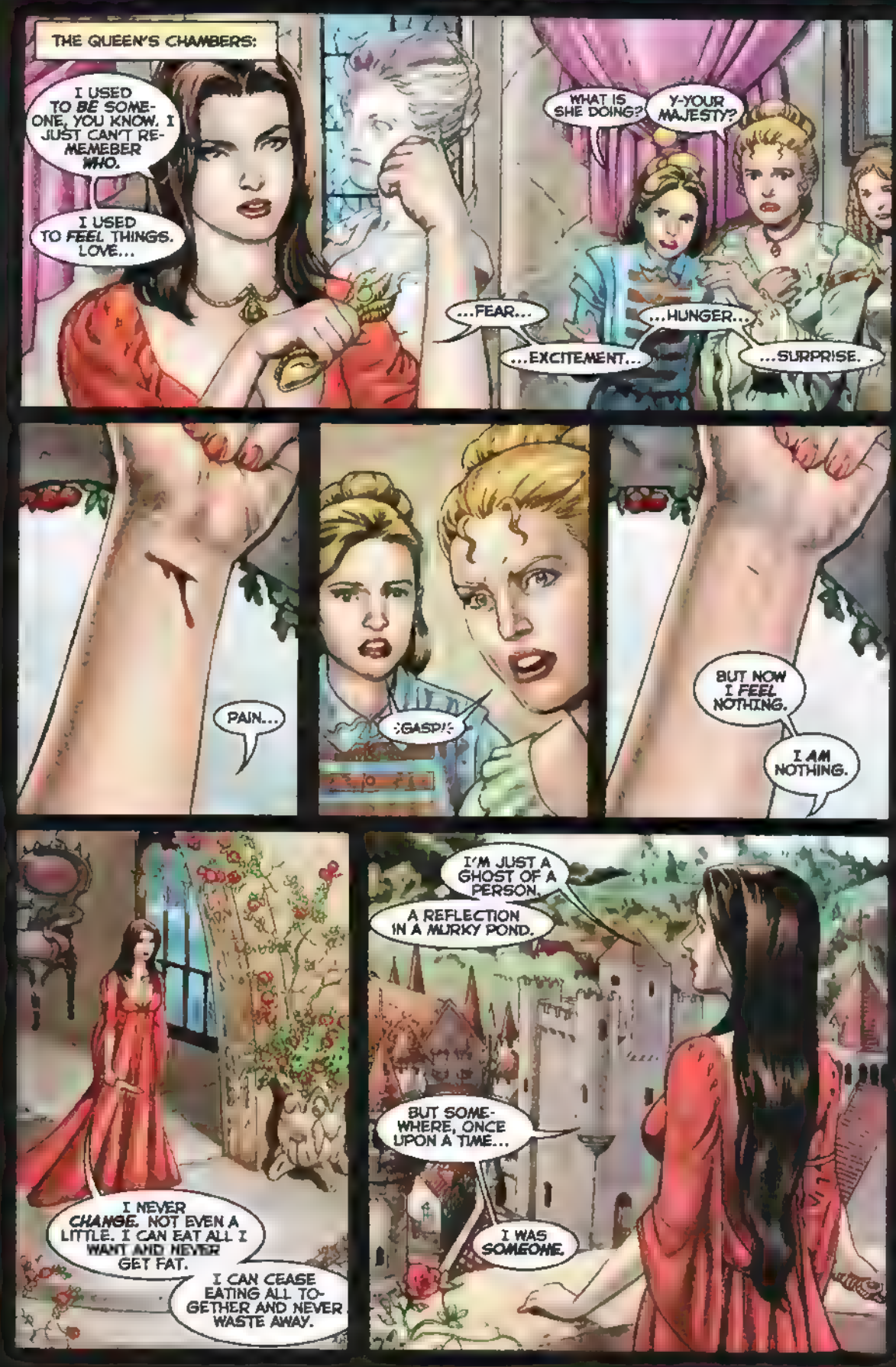
COO!

I'm tired and I'm troubled and I want to go home.

Help me, Obi-Wan Kenobi! You're my only hope.'

Yours truly, Kildare.

P.S.: Don't even think of saying, "I told you so," Pug. Not unless you want a severe kick in the balls!
knock knock
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
GOOD MORNING, MY LADY!
HEY, EMBER.
WE ALL MISSED YOU AT BREAK-FAST.
I LOST MY APPETITE. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
I HAVE SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU. SOME-THING WON-DERFUL!
OH, YEAH? AND WHAT IS THAT?
IT'S A SURPRISE!
YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW ME.
AND WE NEED TO BE QUIET. AND SNEAKY!
ARE YOU GOOD AT BEING SNEAKY?
BELIEVE ME.
WHEN I HAVE TO, I CAN SNEAK WITH THE BEST OF THEM, KIDDO.
LEAD ON.


THE QUEEN'S CHAMBERS:
I USED TO BE SOMEONE, YOU KNOW. I JUST CAN'T REMEMBER WHO.
I USED TO FEEL THINGS. LOVE...
WHAT IS SHE DOING?
Y-YOUR MAJESTY?
...FEAR...
...EXCITEMENT...
...HUNGER...
...SURPRISE.
PAIN...
:GASP!:
BUT NOW I FEEL NOTHING.
I AM NOTHING.
I NEVER CHANGE. NOT EVEN A LITTLE. I CAN EAT ALL I WANT AND NEVER GET FAT.
I CAN CEASE EATING ALL TOGETHER AND NEVER WASTE AWAY.
I'M JUST A GHOST OF A PERSON.
A REFLECTION IN A MURKY POND.
BUT SOMEWHERE, ONCE UPON A TIME...
I WAS SOMEONE.

IF ONLY I COULD REMEMBER...
YOUR HAND, MY LADY! QUICKLY, WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME!
WHO...? DADDY... IS THAT YOU?
I AM YOUR *PRINCE*! YOU CALLED FOR ME AND I CAME! I HAVE PREPARED A MOST WONDROUS *KINGDOM* FOR YOU.
IT'S JUST BEYOND THESE WOODS.
LOOK! IS IT NOT *MARVELOUS*? THIS SHALL BE YOUR HOME, FOREVERMORE.
IS... IS THIS HEAVEN?
OH NO! IT IS MUCH NICER THAN *HEAVEN*.

I...I...
HAAH!
NOO!
YOUR HIGHNESS!
OH, SWEET MERCY!
WHAT ARE YOU SHRIEKING AT, YOU SILLY BUNCH OF MAGPIES?!
HAVEN'T YOU BEEN LISTENING? I CAN'T BE WOUNDED! I CAN'T BE HARMED!
I HAVEN'T THE HEART.

YOU'RE A VERY GOOD SNEAKER, DO YOU KNOW THAT?

THANK YOU. SO ARE YOU.

LAST NIGHT I COULD FEEL THE WALLS SHIFTING. THE CASTLE WAS CHANGING AGAIN.

AND THEN THIS MORNING, I FOUND THIS LITTLE PASSAGEWAY, JUST DOWN THE HALL FROM MY TOWER.

IT'S A LIBRARY.

WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL, AND MOST WONDERFUL WONDERFUL!

AND YET AGAIN WONDERFUL, AND AFTER THAT OUT OF ALL HOOPING!

SO I WENT EXPLORING. I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY LUCK!

YOU SEE, USUALLY IT'S LOCKED UP AND ONLY HANS HAS THE KEY. BUT THAT'S FOR THE MAIN DOOR.

OH, YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE THIS!

I MUST ADMIT, EMBER. THIS IS PRETTY COOL.
I ALWAYS WANTED TO COME HERE, BUT HANS WOULD NEVER LET ME.
BECAUSE OF...WELL... YOU KNOW.
WELL, FOR ONCE THE OLD FOOL MIGHT HAVE A POINT.
I THINK YOU SHOULD BE VERY CAREFUL IN HERE. DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING, OKAY?
OKAY!
WOW. AND I THOUGHT I HAD A COLLECTION.
I WONDER...
DO YOU KNOW IF THERE'S AN ATLAS OR A MAP OF THE KINGDOM? SOMETHING THAT WOULD SHOW THE WAY OUT?
I DON'T KNOW. LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE, THE BOOKS KEEP CHANGING, DEPENDING ON THEIR MOOD.
HMM. THEY DON'T SEEM TO BE FILED IN ANY ORDER.
WHAT'S THIS?
THIS IS A HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK.
WHAT WOULD THIS BE DOING HERE?

Neal John D. McCoy
CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER.
WHAT ELSE IS IN HERE?
NOW THIS IS DEFINITELY WEIRD.
I KNOW THIS BOOK. IT'S FROM FAERIE!
"RIBALD OF THE WEAVER."
WHAT'S A "RIBALD"?
WELL, IN THIS CASE IT WAS A RATHER NAUGHTY PLAY PERFORMED FOR THE COURT BY UDO, THE KINGS FOOL.
OBERON-- THE REAL OBERON-- THOUGHT THE STORY WAS MAKING FUN OF HIM. HE FLEW INTO SUCH A RAGE THAT HE BANISHED UDO FROM THE REALM.
THAT WAS MEAN.
I THOUGHT THE SAME THING. I GUESS I WAS ABOUT YOUR AGE WHEN IT HAPPENED. I FELT VERY BAD FOR POOR UDO. IT DIDN'T SEEM FAIR. HE WAS ALWAYS QUITE KIND TO ME.
HELLO? IS THERE SOMEONE IN--
WHAT IS THIS?!
EMBER! YOU KNOW THIS ROOM IS FORBIDDEN!
HANS! I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN ANY HARM.
THE KNOWLEDGE HOUSED HERE IS VITAL TO THE SAFETY AND WELFARE OF THE KINGDOM!
IF ANYTHING SHOULD HAPPEN TO IT, ANY OF IT...
YOU MUST LEAVE IMMEDIATELY, BOTH OF YOU!

BITE ME, PRICKLE-BUTT! I'M NOT DONE READING.
HOW DARE YOU! YOU ARE A GUEST HERE! THAT IS NO WAY TO BEHAVE!
I AM NOT A GUEST! I AM A PRISONER! ONE WHO IS VERY ANXIOUS TO LEAVE, I MIGHT ADD.
YOU MAY PETITION THE KING ABOUT ANY GRIEVANCES.
NEVERTHELESS, YOU MUST LEAVE THE LIBRARY NOW. DON'T FORCE ME TO CALL THE GUARDS.
EMBER, I WILL DEAL WITH YOU LATER.
SHE CALLED YOU PRICKLE-BUTT!
EMBER!
KILDARE...
KILDARE, WAIT. I'M SORRY I GOT YOU INTO TROUBLE. I DIDN'T MEAN TO.
DON'T WORRY, EMBER. THIS ISN'T TROUBLE. WHEN I'M READY TO MAKE TROUBLE, BELIEVE ME THEY'LL KNOW IT.
UGNH! I HATE THIS PLACE!
I will show you the way out
Meet me in the woods at Midnight
-Hunter

MIDNIGHT.
HUNTER?

HELLO? ARE YOU HERE?
I AM.
AND I AM PREPARED TO HELP YOU.
LET ME GUESS. OUT OF THE KINDNESS OF YOUR HEART?
THE QUEEN WOULD BE HAPPIER IF YOU WERE NO LONGER HERE.
YOUR WISHES COINCIDE WITH HERS, THAT IS ALL.
ALTHOUGH I MUST CONFSS A CERTAIN WEAKNESS FOR DAMSELS IN DISTRESS.
AND YOU KNOW THE WAY OUT?
I AM THE HUNTER. A LEAF DOES NOT STIR IN THESE WOODS WITHOUT MY KNOWING.

– TO WHICH THE SEAMSTRESS REPLIED, "AYE, EVERY INCH A KING"
HAH!
IT WAS A JOKE.
YES, WELL...
I SUPPOSE YOU HAD TO HAVE BEEN THERE.

CREAK
LET'S SEE THIS ONE... AND THIS ONE...
OH, AND THIS ONE, TOO.
OH, LOOK! THERE'S THE QUEEN, AND SHE LOOKS FUNNY!
"TYPE IV OVARIAN EPITHELIAL CARCINOMAS."
WHAT AN ODD THING TO NAME YOUR CHILD.

HOW MUCH FARTHER?

NOT MUCH. NOT MUCH AT ALL.

HERE. THIS IS WHERE THE STORY ENDS.

YOU SON OF A BITCH!

KILL HER!

TELL ME, HUNTER. DIDN'T YOU USED TO HAVE *THREE* OF THESE?

ВЖЗЗОУ!

GHAAA...

I AM THE *HUNTER*. THESE WOODS ARE MINE!

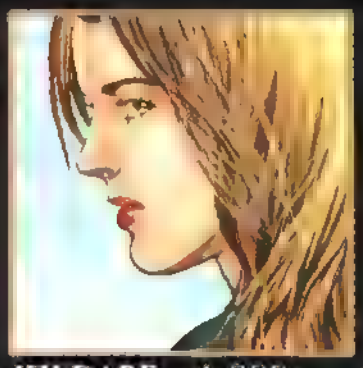
SLAAASH!

AAAH! NOW YOU'VE OFFICIALLY PISSED ME OFF!
YOU AND THE WHOLE MAD LOT OF YOU!
I DIDN'T COME HERE.
I ONLY ASKED TO LEAVE!
AND SO YOU SHALL!
UFF!
"DAMSEL IN DISTRESS" MY ASS!
TELL ME, HUNTER...
UH...
UHH...

YOU SEE ANY DAMSELS AROUND HERE?

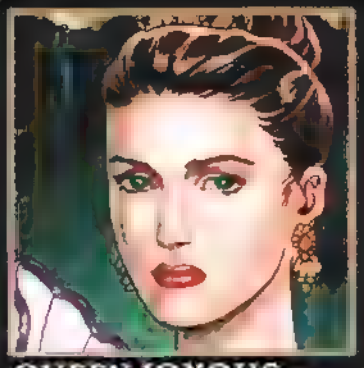
MOTHER. .?
I RELEASE YOU.

ARIA
The Uses of Enchantment
image
4
$2.95
HOLGUIN
MEDINA
IMAGECOMICS.COM



KILDARE – A 900-year-old Faerie Princess who has chosen to live in the mortal world for the past several centuries. In her time she has danced with emperors, consorted with assassins and gotten blind drunk with rock stars. She has been painted by Rossetti, courted by Byron and had songs written about by Syd Barrett. She currently runs a bookstore/collectibles shop called Otherworlds in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan.

THE KING – The monarch of the House of Entyre, he claims to be Oberon the Second, lost heir to the fabled king of Faerie.

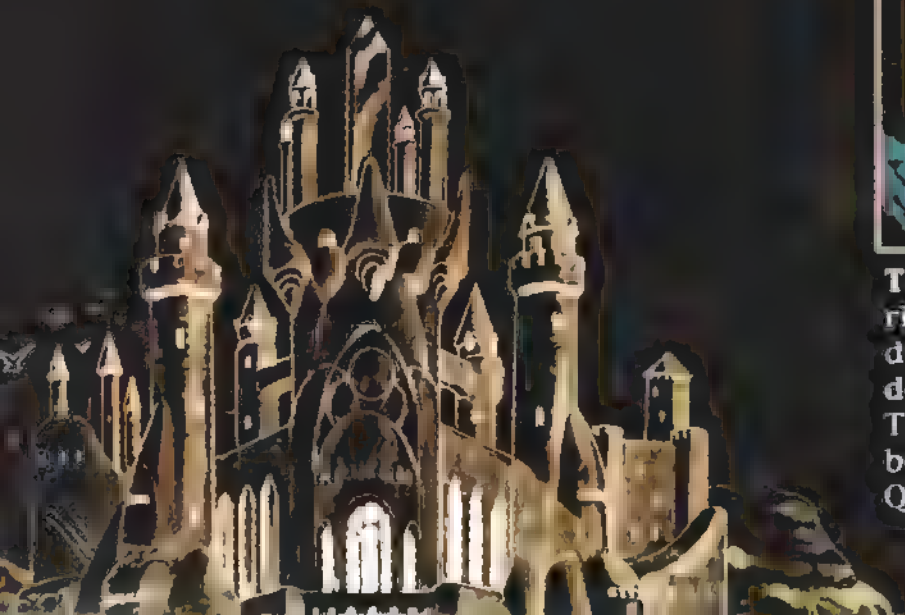


QUEEN JOYOUS – The King's melancholy and distant wife.

HANS – Personal secretary of King Oberon II, responsible for the day to day operation of The Castle.

EMBER—The ward of the King, Ember is a young girl with a bright and sunny disposition, despite the fact that she is perpetually on fire.

THE BEAST – A terrible monster that dwells in the deepest dungeons of The Castle. Said to be the child of Queen Joyous.



Somewhere around the corner, just beyond the edge of perception, lies a world you never dreamed existed: A world where creatures of myth and gods long thought dead walk unnoticed among the crowded streets of Manhattan. The world of...

Image comics presents

ARIA

The Uses of Enchantment

created by
Brian Holguin and Brian Haberlin

written by
Brian Holguin

art by
Lan Medina

coloring by
Steve Oliff
& Arsia Rozegar

lettering by
Avalon Studios

cover by
Jay Anacleto

Publisher
Jim Valentino

Director of Marketing
Eric Stephenson

Director of Production
Brent Braun

Controller
Traci Hale

Art Director
Brett Evans

Web Developer
Allen Hui

Accounting Asst.
Cindie Espinoza

Book Trade Coordinator
Tim Moberly

WWW.IMAGECOMICS.COM

ARIA: The Uses of Enchantment Vol. 1, #4, Sept. 2003. FIRST PRINTING. Published by Image Comics Inc. Office of Publication: 1071 N. Batavia St. Ste. A Orange, CA 92867. $2.95 US / $4.10 Canada. Image and its logos are ® and © 2003 Image Comics, Inc. ARIA: The Uses of Enchantment its logo and all related characters are trademark and copyright Brian Haberlin and Brian Holguin, Inc. 2002.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Any similarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reprinted without the express written consent of Brian Haberlin and Brian Holguin.

PRINTED IN CANADA.

Previously...

Twenty Years Ago: Joyce Mitford, recently divorced and diagnosed with terminal cancer drives through the back roads of the Catskill Mountains of New York. She reminisces about better times, thinking back to a storybook theme park called the Kingdom of Enchantment that she often visited as a child. Caught off guard by a stag in the road, Joyce swerves and sends her car careening down a rocking slope. As she lay dying, a mysterious figure emerges from the woods, pulls her from the wreckage and carries her back to the ruins of the Kingdom of Enchantment.

The Present: A mysterious letter leads Kildare to secret magic kingdom tucked away in the Catkills. There she is feted as guest of honor at magnificent feast and is doted upon by the mysterious King Oberon II, much to the dismay of the king's icy wife, Queen Joyous. In a private meeting, Kildare confronts the King, telling him she doesn't believe that he is descended from Oberon and wants to know what secrets he is keeping. Kildare learns she is unable to leave the Kingdom. Ember leads Kildare to the forbidden library, where Kildare discovers clues about the origin of the kingdom, including a link to Udo, a court jester banished by the original King Oberon centuries ago. Kildare later receives a note from Hunter offering to show her the way out of the Kingdom but he ambushes her in the woods. Kildare defeats Hunter. The Queen, who has been watching the proceedings in her magic mirrors, decides it is time to unleash the Beast that is chained in the castle dungeon. Meanwhile, Ember sneaks back into the library with disastrous results.

THE CATSKILL MOUNTAINS. 1950.
WHEEE!
I CAN REMEMBER IT ALL SO PERFECTLY. THE CHOIR OF SCREAMING CHILDREN. THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF SUN-FADED COLORS.
A SENSE THAT SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD THERE REALLY WAS MAGIC.
IT WAS HEAVEN. ALL IN A SUMMER'S DAY.
END OF THE LINE!
DADDY!

HEY, GIRLS! DID YOU HAVE FUN?
UH-HUH!
CAN WE GO AGAIN? PLEASE!
NO, PRINCESS. THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY. WE'VE GOT A LONG DRIVE HOME.
OH...
DADDY, WHEN I GROW UP, I'M GOING TO LIVE HERE.
IS THAT RIGHT?
UH-HUH.
I'M GOING TO MARRY A PRINCE AND LIVE IN A CASTLE AND NEVER LEAVE.
AND YOU AND KERRI CAN COME VISIT ME.
BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO DO WHAT I TELL YOU 'CAUSE I'LL BE THE QUEEN.

THE LIBRARY. NOW.
OH, NO!
WHAT HAVE I DONE?
THIS IS ALL MY FAULT.
ROAAARRR!

THE DUNGEON.

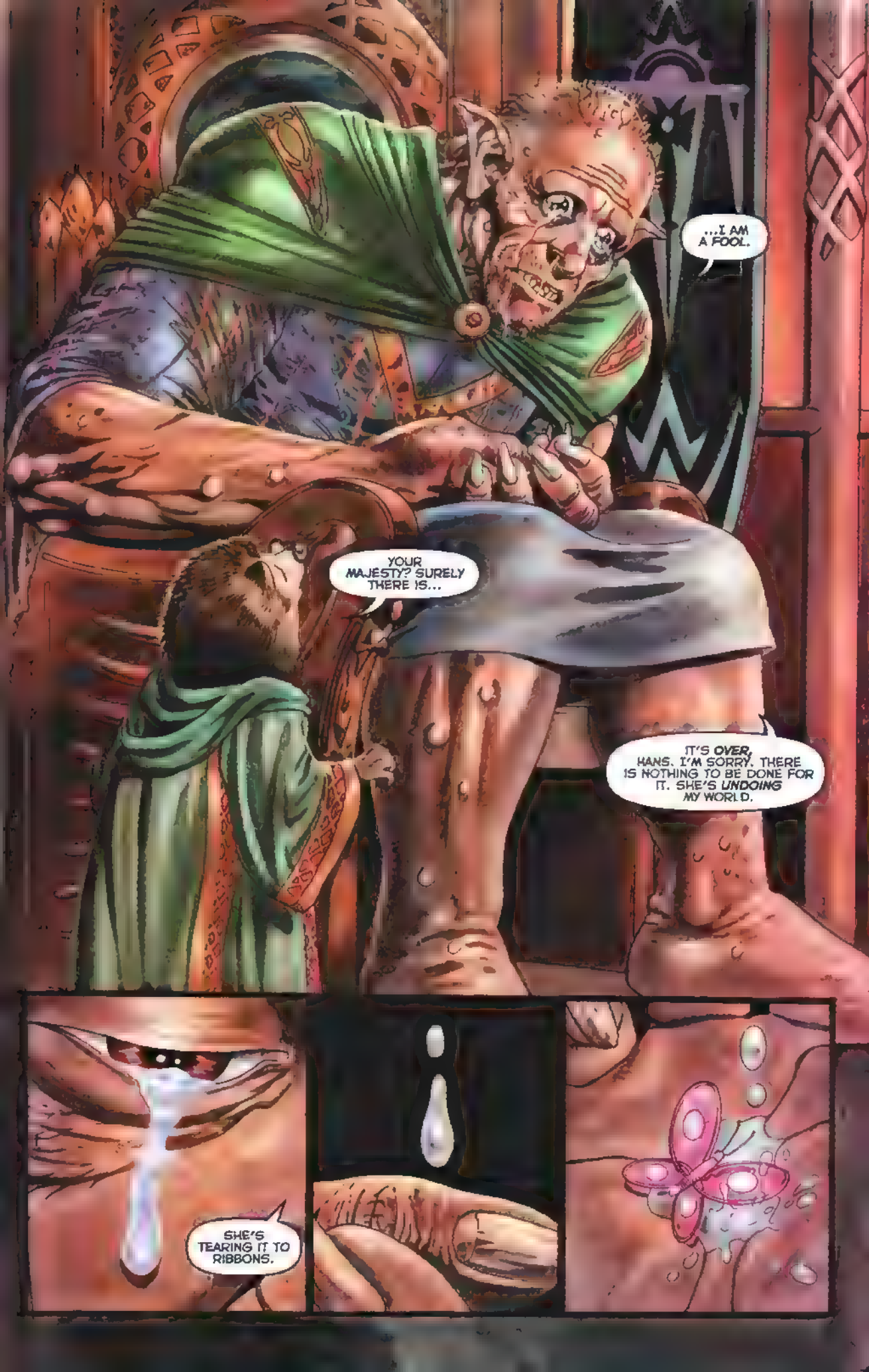
AT LAST... I...AM....

FREE!

WHAMP!

I WILL KILL THEM! I WILL KILL THEM ALL!
WHOMP!
I WILL HUFF AND I WILL PUFF AND I WILL TEAR THIS PLACE DOWN!
BRICK BY BRICK!
THAT'S A GOOD BOY.

THE KITCHEN.
WHAT'S HAPPENING, MA'AM?
I'M SCARED, MA'AM.
CUDDLE CLOSE, MUFFINS. THERE'S TROUBLE AFOOT.
THE QUEEN'S CHAMBERS.
YOUR HIGHNESS! COME QUICK! THE CASTLE IS SHAKING.
YOUR HIGHNESS?
WHERE IS SHE? WHERE IS THE QUEEN?
THE THRONE ROOM.
YOUR MAJESTY!
IT'S A CATASTROPHE! A CALAMITY! WE ARE UNDER SIEGE!
WHATEVER SHALL WE DO? THIS IS YOUR REALM! YOU ARE OUR KING!
PLEASE, TELL US WHAT TO DO!
YOUR MAJESTY?
I AM NOT A KING...


...I AM A FOOL.
YOUR MAJESTY? SURELY THERE IS...
IT'S OVER, HANS. I'M SORRY. THERE IS NOTHING TO BE DONE FOR IT. SHE'S UNDOING MY WORLD.
SHE'S TEARING IT TO RIBBONS.

THE INTRUDER.

SHE EMERGES FROM THE DARK WOOD, BLOOD FRESH ON HER HANDS.

WHAT THE DEVIL?

EMBER!

EMBER!

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?

BA-THOOM!

SHE IS AN OUTSIDER.

SHE WASN'T HERE AT THE BEGINNING, LIKE THE REST OF US.

BUT SHE IS HERE TO WITNESS THE END.

EMBER?

KERRASH!
SEVEN HELLS! WHAT IS THAT THING?
ROWAAR!
UGHN! EMBER, TALK TO ME! WHAT'S HAPPENING?
IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD. IT HAD TO HAPPEN SOONER OR LATER.

THE CHILD SCREAMS, LIKE ALL NEWBORNS. ITS BIRTH CRY SHATTERS STONE WALLS AND SHAKES THE HEAVENS.

THUNDER RENDS THE SKY. RAIN FALLS DOWN LIKE TEARS.

I SHOUT MY RAGE TO THE STORM, CURSE THE ELEMENTS AND DARE THEM TO WASH US AWAY.

DROWN US ALL, LIKE SOME WRATHFUL GOD GROWN WEARY AND DISAPPOINTED WITH ITS CREATIONS.

PLEASE... HELP US...

SAVE US! PLEASE!

I MUST PROTEST! ALL I EVER DID WAS SERVE! I DESERVE BETTER!

I CAN'T HELP YOU. I'M SORRY.

IT'S OUT OF MY HANDS.

I REAP *CURSE* UPON *CURSE*. I BLASPHEME AGAINST CREATION ITSELF. SCREAM UNTIL MY THROAT IS RAW AND MY VOICE IS GONE.

I ACHE TO TEAR DOWN THE CURTAINS OF THIS WORLD AND RIP THE BACK-DROP TO SHREDS.

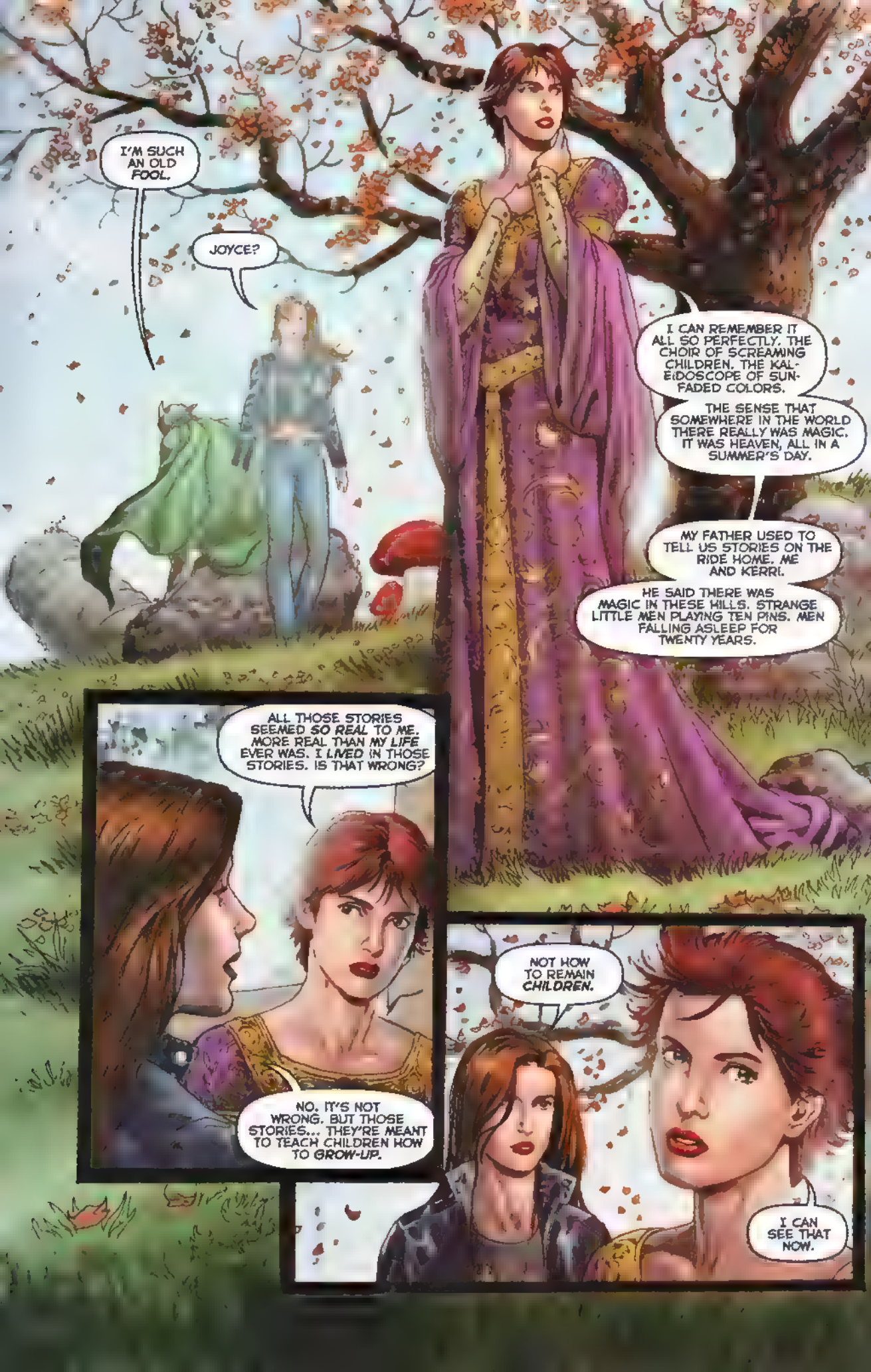
CRACK OPEN THE SPELL.

RIP THE NIGHT SKY DOWN FROM ITS SCAFFOLDING AND FEEL THE SUN BURN HOT AGAINST MY FACE ONE MORE TIME.

WHAT THE HELL JUST HAPPENED?

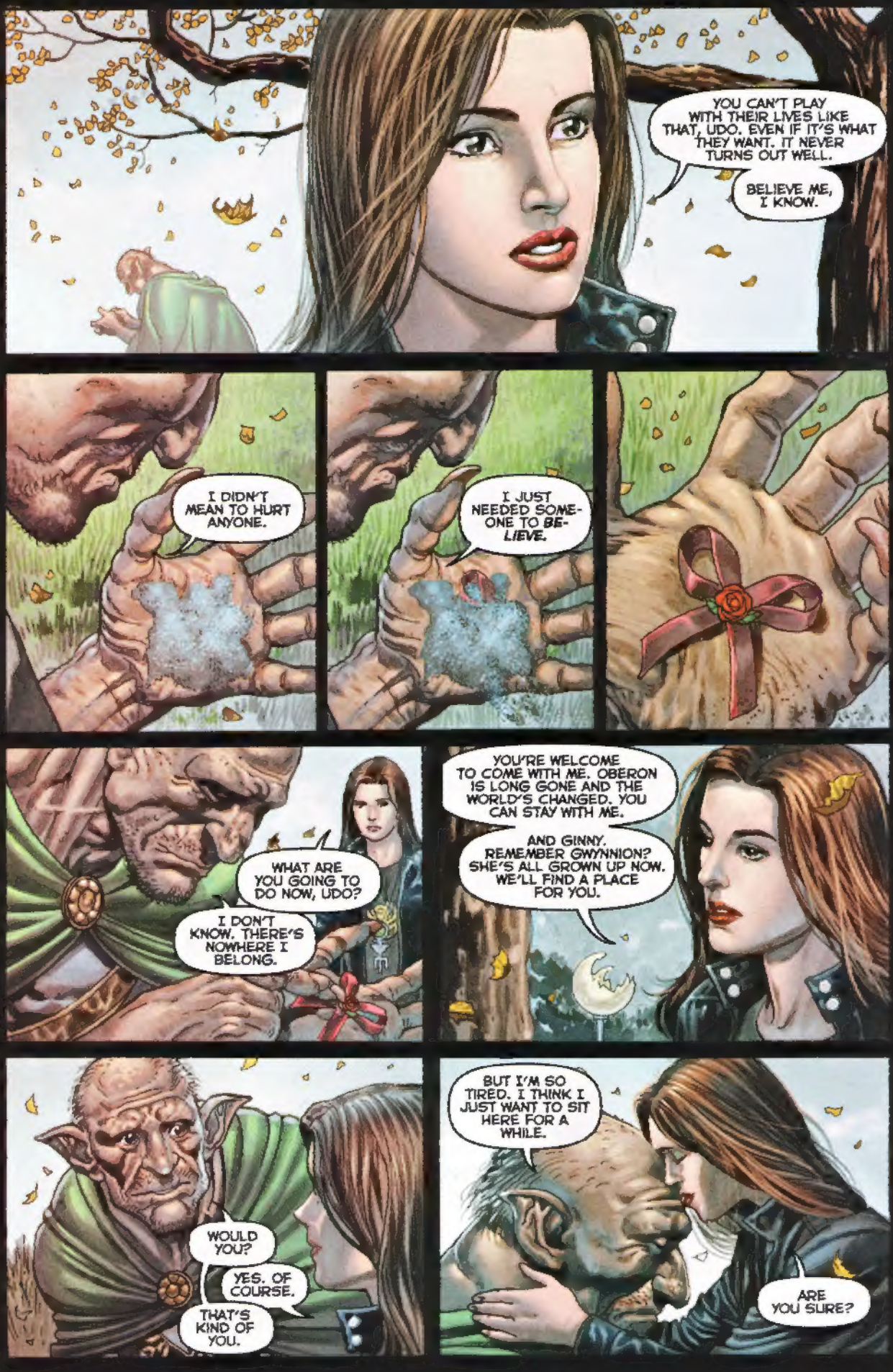
HELLO? EMBER? ANYONE?

UDO? MY GOD, IS THAT YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? ARE YOU... DID YOU MAKE THIS PLACE?
ALL I WANTED WAS A HOME.
THE KING BANISHED ME... I JUST WANTED TO BELONG.
BUT HOW...?
I HAD A WISH STONE. I...I STOLE IT FROM OBERON'S GALLERY.
I WANDERED FOR SO LONG TILL I FOUND THIS PLACE. THE CHILDREN HERE WERE ALL SO HAPPY. THEIR DREAMS WERE SO PURE.
I WATCHED AND LISTENED FOR SO LONG, STILL AS STONE. I COLLECTED THEIR WISHES AND HELD THEM TIGHTLY.
I LOVED THEM ALL. I TRULY DID.
BUT I LOVED JOYCE MOST OF ALL. HER WISH WAS ALWAYS THE SAME.
BUT WHY... WHY DID YOU BRING ME HERE?
SHE GREW WEARY. SHE DIDN'T BELIEVE ANYMORE. I WANTED TO MAKE HER ANGRY. JEALOUS. ANYTHING.

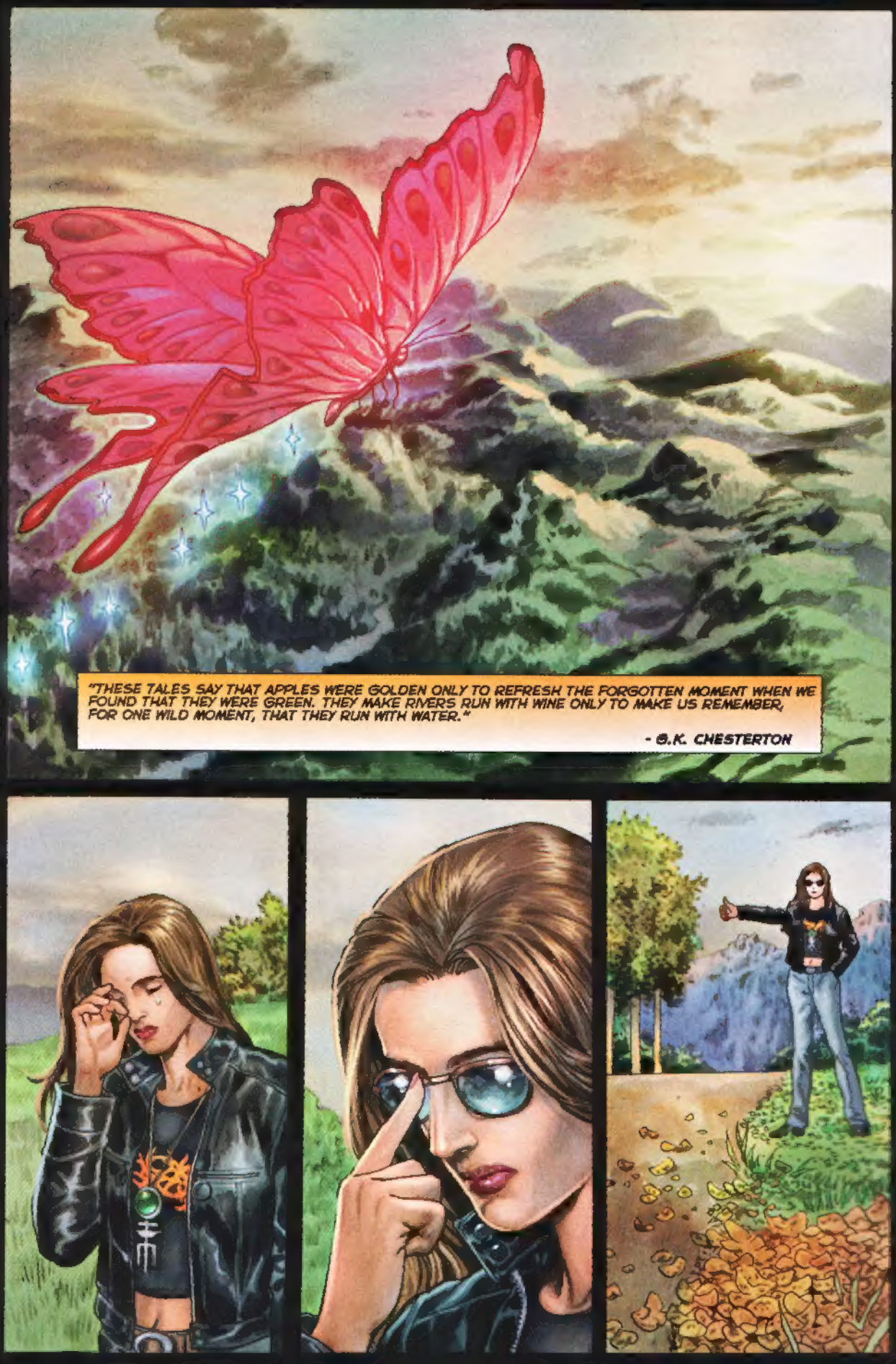

I'M SUCH AN OLD FOOL.
JOYCE?
I CAN REMEMBER IT ALL SO PERFECTLY. THE CHOIR OF SCREAMING CHILDREN. THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF SUN-FADED COLORS.
THE SENSE THAT SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD THERE REALLY WAS MAGIC. IT WAS HEAVEN, ALL IN A SUMMER'S DAY.
MY FATHER USED TO TELL US STORIES ON THE RIDE HOME. ME AND KERRI.
HE SAID THERE WAS MAGIC IN THESE HILLS. STRANGE LITTLE MEN PLAYING TEN PINS. MEN FALLING ASLEEP FOR TWENTY YEARS.
ALL THOSE STORIES SEEMED SO REAL TO ME. MORE REAL THAN MY LIFE EVER WAS. I LIVED IN THOSE STORIES. IS THAT WRONG?
NO. IT'S NOT WRONG. BUT THOSE STORIES... THEY'RE MEANT TO TEACH CHILDREN HOW TO GROW-UP.
NOT HOW TO REMAIN CHILDREN.
I CAN SEE THAT NOW.

I THOUGHT MY LIFE WASN'T FAIR.
THERE WAS NO HAPPILY EVER AFTER FOR ME. NO WHITE KNIGHT.
NO PRINCE CHARMING COMING TO SAVE ME.
WAS THERE?
:SNIFF: YOU KNOW I TRIED TO LOVE HIM. MY BABY. I REALLY DID. BUT I JUST COULDN'T.
I MEAN HOW COULD I? AFTER ALL, HE WAS THE ONE WHO KILLED ME.
HE DIDN'T KILL YOU. I DID.

YOU?
YES. IT WAS IN THE BOOKS. I READ IT.
I REMEMBER NOW... THE REFLECTION OF THE FIRE DANCING ACROSS THE WINDSHIELD.
IT LOOKED SO HAPPY I THOUGHT. LIKE A LITTLE GIRL.
YOUR MAJESTY?
I KNOW YOU MEANT WELL.
BUT, PLEASE... LET ME GO.
WILL IT HURT MUCH?
YES, MA'AM.
THAT'S OKAY.


YOU CAN'T PLAY WITH THEIR LIVES LIKE THAT, UDO. EVEN IF IT'S WHAT THEY WANT. IT NEVER TURNS OUT WELL.
BELIEVE ME, I KNOW.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT ANYONE.
I JUST NEEDED SOMEONE TO BELIEVE.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW, UDO?
I DON'T KNOW. THERE'S NOWHERE I BELONG.
YOU'RE WELCOME TO COME WITH ME. OBERON IS LONG GONE AND THE WORLD'S CHANGED. YOU CAN STAY WITH ME.
AND GINNY. REMEMBER GWYNNION? SHE'S ALL GROWN UP NOW. WE'LL FIND A PLACE FOR YOU.
WOULD YOU?
YES. OF COURSE.
THAT'S KIND OF YOU.
BUT I'M SO TIRED. I THINK I JUST WANT TO SIT HERE FOR A WHILE.
ARE YOU SURE?

YES.
I WISH...
UDO...?


"THESE TALES SAY THAT APPLES WERE GOLDEN ONLY TO REFRESH THE FORGOTTEN MOMENT WHEN WE FOUND THAT THEY WERE GREEN. THEY MAKE RIVERS RUN WITH WINE ONLY TO MAKE US REMEMBER, FOR ONE WILD MOMENT, THAT THEY RUN WITH WATER."
- G.K. CHESTERTON